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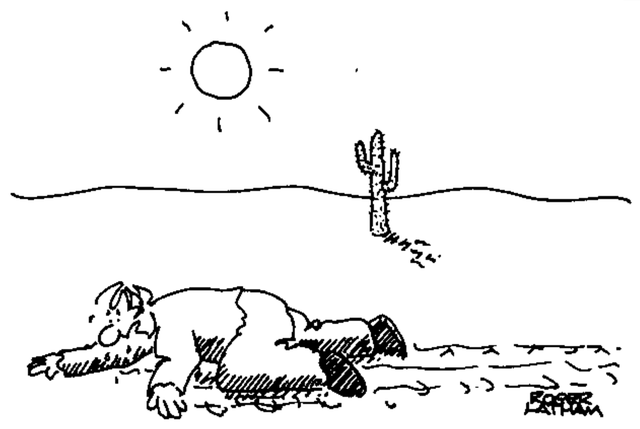
Gnome

THE decision of Trinity Gnome PLC to pay off its former editor Mr Piers Moron with a cheque for £1.7 billion will send out a clear message to the newspaper industry.

It will let them know in clear terms to any reckless editor who considers publishing obviously bogus photographs in the hope of boosting circulation that this behaviour will not be rewarded. That is why we are punishing Mr Moron by giving him this derisory cheque.

Let that be a lesson to Mr Moron and a warning to the Morons of tomorrow of exactly what they can expect if they disgrace their profession – namely a suitcase full of cash and a chance to "fill their boots".

Lord Gnome,
Trinity Gnome PLC
Victor Blank-Cheque House,
EC 1.7M



"Compensation... compensation..."

Coup what a scorcher

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EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. Tel: 020 7437 4017.
Fax: 020 7437 0705. Email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk
http://www.private-eye.co.uk

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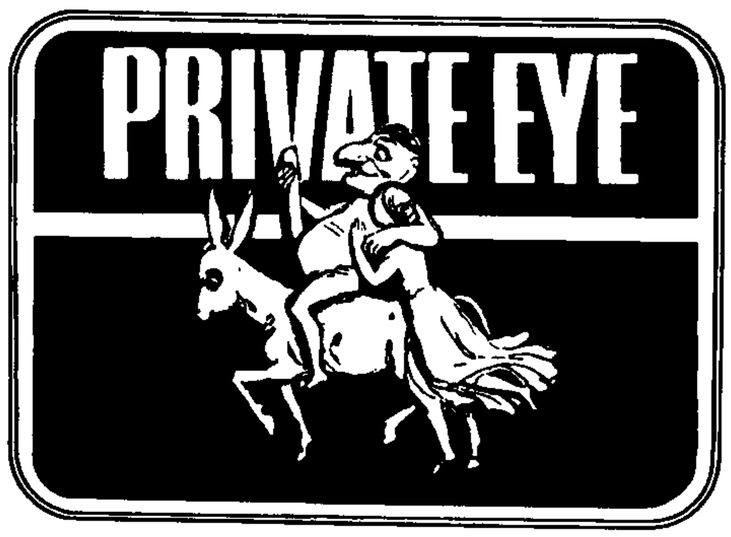
SUBSCRIPTION RATES
£21 per annum. Europe and Eire £29. Airmail (rest of world) £38. Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Mastercard/Visa.

ADVERTISING
Display: 020 7878 2303 Classified: 020 7240 9129

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ .
Distributed by P.E. Distributions, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017.

ABC



FURTHER dire embarrassment looms for the Rev Blair. Dr Chai Patel, his favourite private healthcare guru, has been summoned to appear before the General Medical Council next January to answer charges of professional misconduct. Patel, who is a "new" Labour donor and secretary of the Blairite think-tank IPPR, could be struck off as a doctor if the verdict goes against him.

This will come as no surprise to readers of the *Eye*, which has been chronicling Patel's brilliant career for more than four years. Until 2002 he was chief executive of Westminster Healthcare, which ran a chain of private nursing and old people's homes – while he simultaneously acted as a government adviser on "health modernisation", persuading ministers to decant elderly bed-blocking patients from NHS hospitals into establishments such as those owned by, er, Westminster Healthcare.

Though Patel's business flourished, some of its patients did not. In March 2001 we reported a litany of complaints about conditions at the Thistle Hill nursing home in Knaresborough, Yorkshire. Later that year we revealed more shocking allegations about Lynde House, an old people's care home in Twickenham, south-west London, where frail patients were left for hours sitting in their own waste; they suffered preventable falls and "unexplained bruising", and were left motionless for so long they developed pressure sores. Some residents went unshowered and unbathed for weeks.

These allegations were eventually confirmed two years ago in a damning report from an independent inspector, Mary McLaren, and they form the basis of the General Medical Council case. Patel is accused of failing properly to investigate the neglect and mistreatment of patients at Lynde House, despite a barrage of complaints from friends and families of the elderly residents.

Just before the McLaren report was published, Patel sold Westminster Healthcare (including Lynde House) for £288m. He is now the boss and part-owner of the Priory chain of upmarket clinics – where he has once again shown his Blairite commitment to private-public deals. His firm now gets an estimated £60m a year in public money for patients who would previously have been cared for in the NHS.

In 1999 Tony Blair awarded Patel a CBE for "services to social care policies". If the GMC now decides that his own social care policies at Lynde House amounted to professional misconduct, will he have the decency to return the gong?

WILL the government learn anything from the aftermath of the Iraq war? When it comes to dishing out military contracts, it appears not.

On 17 August the US army announced that it would be withholding $60m a month from Kellogg Brown Root (part of US vice-president Dick Cheney's old firm Halliburton) under the contract KBR has to provide accommodation and equipment to thousands of soldiers. A leaked Pentagon audit had earlier revealed that the company could not account for $1.8bn it had charged the US government.

Two days later Britain's ministry of defence announced the winner of another enormous military contract, a £5bn private finance initiative (PFI) deal to upgrade and service the army's barracks at Salisbury and Aldershot.

The lucky consortium, identified as "provisional" preferred bidder last year and now confirmed following approval from the treasury, is Aspire. The name is nicely "new" Labour, but closer inspection reveals that this is a joint venture between construction company Mowlem and well-known service experts... Kellogg Brown Root.

PAUL DRAYSON, founder and chairman of Powderject, the biotechnology company that won a government vaccine contract shortly after he gave the Labour party £100,000, was further favoured earlier this year when he was made a life peer.

It has now emerged that, soon after this honour, Lord Smallpox handed over another half a million to the party – the actions, obviously, of a very public-spirited man who wants to do everything he can to help provide for a brighter future under "new" Labour.

Meanwhile Drayson's company continues to sue the government for repayment of an unspecified, but probably very large, amount of tax on the grounds that British tax law for multinational companies is overridden by European law.

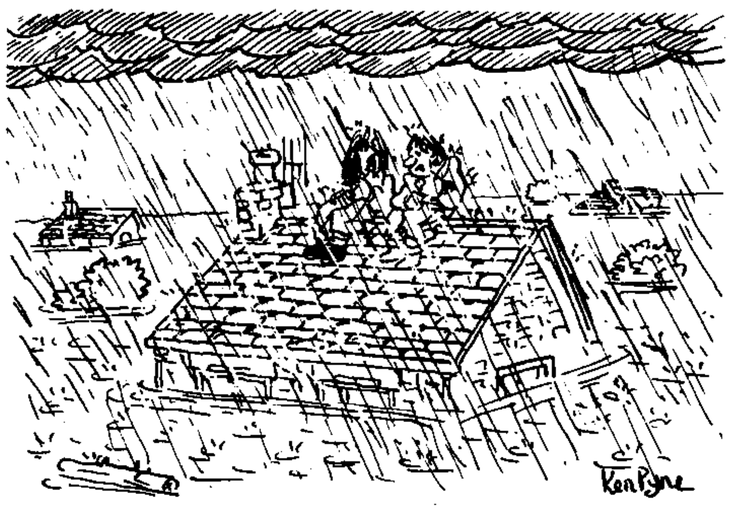
The "group litigation orders" that Powderject and hundreds of other companies have signed up to continue to rumble through the British and European courts, with the outcome expected to be a dent in the exchequer (and eventually public spending) running into billions of pounds. But this should not suggest that, when giving his money away, Drayson would act with anything other than the public interest at heart.

AUGUST has seen a flurry of activity from Enrico Bondi, the Italian court-appointed administrator for bankrupt dairy company Parmalat, which sank under 14 billion euros of debt last December.

The latest company to receive a writ from Bondi is investment bank Credit Suisse First Boston, which is accused of engineering an elaborate financing deal in January 2002 that enabled Parmalat to borrow 750 million euros while showing only 250 million of it on its balance sheet.

With 500 million euros of debt thus concealed, the company was able to borrow even more, adding further to the mess when the house of cards collapsed nearly two years later. Bondi wants CSFB to cough up the 248 million euros Parmalat paid to CSFB as part of the deal.

The case could prove embarrassing for the man in charge of CSFB in Europe at the time, chief executive officer Hector Sants. In May this year Sants was appointed managing director at the UK's principal financial regulator, the financial services authority. He was given the job by FSA chief executive John Tiner, a partner in accountancy firm Arthur Andersen until it went bust following its failures in auditing Enron. Sants is now responsible for regulating "wholesale and institutional markets" – ie what investment banks like CSFB get up to in this country.



"Can't you talk about anything other than the weather all the time?"

Street of Shame

WHO enjoyed the best corporate freebie to the Olympics? Could it have been the hacks on Swatch's five-day junket to the games, with accommodation provided in the five-star Inter-Continental hotel?

The *Express*'s Gideon Brooks was certainly eager to repay the watchmaker for its hospitality. After writing up an interview with former sprinter Carl Lewis, to whom Swatch had secured him access, Brooks appended the following news item on to his article: "The Swiss team have got off the mark on the medals table but perhaps their nation's greatest contribution has been of a technical nature. Swiss-based company Swatch are providing the timing and display mechanisms for the Games – a mammoth logistical exercise… The company have provided touchpad technology which measures to 1,000th of a second in the pool, photo-finish and starting block systems for the track and distance measuring systems accurate to 5mm in 100m on the field."

Happily, Brooks managed to ignore the fact that at the same time Swatch's timekeepers were being widely blamed for the cock-up which nearly cost Britain's eventing team a medal.

SWATCH wasn't the only company to realise that the easiest way to generate good publicity is to fly a load of hacks to a major sporting occasion and ply them with as much food, drink and free tickets as they can get their hands on.

Also playing the junket card was national lottery operator Camelot, who took a group of senior editors out to Athens. Which would probably explain why when the men's rowing team won the gold medal, nearly every paper managed to crowbar in a mention of the fact that the crew were sponsored by… Camelot.

"A SUSPECTED Al Qaeda plot to target Tony Blair's home has been foiled," reported the *Daily Express* on 16 August, describing how Durham police thwarted terrorists when two asylum seekers in a stolen car were arrested while gathering information near Trimdon, County Durham, as possible preparation for an attack.

The astounding exclusive was just the sort of scaremongering stuff beloved of US Fox TV and was quickly picked up and broadcast around the world, appearing in Australian newspapers the next day.

The police who supposedly foiled the terror plot, however, were baffled by the story. "Let me say in the clearest possible language this story is rubbish and the *Daily Express* were told this in unequivocal language when they first asked us," said a Durham police spokesman.

"It is true two Lithuanians were arrested at Wingate nature reserve in September of 2003," he added, but the men's presence in the area was believed to be related to drugs, not terrorism.

JUST FANCY THAT

"Back to Blunkett and Ms Fortier, back to our Home Secretary, 57, and the 'attractive, married, brunette, American publisher, 43, of the *Spectator*' (which the *Daily Express*, with pea-brain populism, describes as 'the Tory Party's bible')." — Peter Preston, *Observer*, 22 August.

"Conspiracy theories abounded on how a Labour Cabinet minister ended up entangled with the wealthy New York debutante who ran the weekly magazine considered the inhouse bible of the Conservative Party." — Antony Barnett, Martin Bright and David Smith, *Observer*, 22 August.

CONFUSION at Associated Newspapers about the bona fides of Gillian McKeith, the health and nutrition guru whose Channel 4 series *You Are What You Eat* has just secured a second series.

With a dubious CV including degrees from colleges that do not award degrees and courses that do not exist, Quackwatch, an American website set up by a doctor, has listed McKeith as a practising nutritionist to be avoided.

When the *Mail on Sunday* tried to question her qualifications and ask is she "really a quack and a danger to our health?", the article was accompanied by a picture of her website including a quote from a respected national newspaper describing her as "The world's most acclaimed nutritionist". The paper in question? None other than the *Daily Mail*!

IT IS as traditional a sign of summer's waning as the departure of the swifts: in the third week of August the *Daily Telegraph* features a pretty 18-year-old girl looking delighted with her A-level results on its front page.

But these are changing times at the paper, and in his quest for "more beefcake" in the *Telegraph*'s pages (see *Eye* 1093), editor Martin Newland this year shocked readers by illustrating his A-level splash with a picture of an (equally pretty) 18-year-old *boy* beaming at the prospect of two As and a B.

Some habits are, however, too hard to break: the page was dominated by a large picture of British Olympic badminton semi-finalist Gail Emms celebrating her victory by allowing the photographer a glimpse up her skirt.

ONE MONTH on from the conviction of a 17-year-old for murdering 14-year-old Stephan Pakeerah, the *Sun* seems to have forgiven the violent computer games it insisted were responsible for his death (despite denials from police that they had anything to do with the case).

Last Friday saw an exciting offer with every copy of "Your No 1 Sun": a copy of computer game Duke Nukem in which the "butt-kicking, no-nonsense king of action" has to travel through New York slaughtering mutant policemen with the aid of a rocket launcher, shot gun, assault rifle and pipe bombs. Fun for all the family indeed!

***DAILY EXPRESS* hacks were caught napping the night the David Blunkett love story broke.**

Editor Phil "Mentally" Hill had to get production staff to slip three pages on the first edition to strike the phrase "seeing another woman" from headlines and copy.

TURNING A BLIND EYE

READERS of the *Guardian* are clearly expected to read other newspapers at times to fill in the gaps left by their own paper's coverage." So wrote Tom Leonard in the *Daily Telegraph*'s media section, mocking the rival paper's refusal to mention David Blunkett's affair.

The *Guardian* did publish a pious leader, referring to the happy couple only as "a senior politician" and "a married woman", which insisted that the story was of no public relevance or interest. But Leonard had no such qualms: "Any *Guardian* readers who wanted to know more would have quickly discovered by buying another paper that the politician is the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, and the woman is Kimberley Fortier."

Well, any other paper apart from the *Telegraph*, at least. Until Leonard's piece on the Thursday, isolated *Telegraph* readers would not have known about the affair, let alone the alleged use of their taxes to pay for both a bodyguard to accompany him on his trips to meet her, and a civil servant to take minutes of the showdown when she told him it was over. As Leonard noted: "Some Fleet Street titles have wallowed in the story, others have barely touched it and others still have completely ignored it."

Just so. While Alan Rusbridger's *Guardian* was decrying "the voyeur instinct", *Observer* editor Roger Alton gleefully undermined his sister paper by running a full page of juicy details *and* a long column on "why the tabloids were right to tell us about Fortier and Blunkett" – written by none other than Peter Preston, Rusbridger's predecessor and erstwhile mentor.

There was a similar internal split at Associated Newspapers. The *Mail on Sunday* got very excited indeed, leading with the affair on both weeks. Yet the *Daily Mail* refused to mention it all: even Peter McHackey was told he couldn't lead his column with a comment on the story. This is because of editor Paul Dacre's great friendship with Blunkett, who described the *Mail* editor as "a man who reflects the best of journalism" while proposing a toast to him at a celebratory dinner last year.

The *Express*, meanwhile, took the line that if the *Mail* was ignoring it, it should push it. And push it it did, deploring Blunkett's "unwise moral blunder" and inviting readers to phone in at 25p a time to confirm that he had acted "atrociously". (This from a newspaper group which has had no fewer than two senior editorial staff jailed in the past year, one for downloading child pornography and the other for violent assault.)

At the other extreme, editorial bosses at the BBC – still smarting from their last epic confrontation with the government – decided not to risk offending a Labour minister again. The story has duly gone unreported in news bulletins, current affairs programmes and even on the supposedly exhaustive BBC website. Type in "Kimberley Fortier" and you will find precisely nothing: as far as the BBC is concerned, her very existence should remain a secret.

But what of the *Telegraph*'s curious reluctance to report on a Labour minister's immorality? Might this be any chance be related to the fact that Kimberley Fortier is publisher of, er, the *Telegraph*-owned *Spectator*?

CLERIHEW

Kimberley Fortier
Said, "Let's do something naughtier!
And if we're caught,
It's a good Spectator sport."

HACKWATCH: OLYMPIC MEDALS

Synchronised swimming

Phelps may not get that far… The Herculean task he set himself is beginning to bite. — **Paul Hayward**, *Daily Telegraph*.

Pinsent's… race of matchless drama, a Herculean struggle. — **Richard Williams**, *Guardian*.

Pinsent's… relentless, Herculean work. — **John Dillon**, *Daily Express*.

Pinsent's… Herculean effort. — **Oliver Holt**, *Daily Mirror*.

Ben Ainslie… a Herculean athlete. — **Bob McKenzie**, *Daily Express*.

Dean Macey will today set out on his Herculean journey, the 10 events of the decathlon. — **Pat Butcher**, *FT*.

Team pursuit

The 2004 games is turning out to be a Greek tragedy for our sportsmen and women. — *Daily Star* editorial.

The final curtain yesterday came down on the Greek tragedy which has overshadowed the first week of the Athens Olympics. — **Duncan Mackay**, *Guardian*.

The latest one-man Greek tragedy, Kostas Kenteris… — **James Mossop**, *Sunday Telegraph*.

A Greek Tragedy: Devastated Denise is forced to quit as Kelly stakes claim. — *Sunday Mirror*.

Paula Radcliffe… will use the experience of this Greek tragedy to drive her to future glory. — *Sun* editorial.

To ask women to run the distance of London to Gatwick in [August heat] was to write the synopsis for a Greek tragedy. And Radcliffe became its central character. — **Neil Wilson**, *Daily Mail*.

Greco-Roman wrestling

Don't miss the clash of Poseidons — Thorpe, Phelps, Van den Hoogenband and Hackett — in the final of 200 metres freestyle. — **Craig Lord**, the *Times*.

Greece's national victory in beating a thousand construction deadlines was turning pyrrhic in front of billions of pairs of eyes. — **Paul Hayward**, *Daily Telegraph*.

Had they studied their Olympic history, the seven weightlifters who followed two fallen local idols into infamy yesterday would never have risked taking drugs before heading to Athens. They would have known the Greek gods were watching and waiting to banish them… Let the wrath of almighty Zeus be upon them. — **Jeff Powell**, *Daily Mail*.

During Darren Campbell's odyssey through life, mishap has become a constantly unwelcome travelling companion… Except that the Great Britain team captain is sanguine about the whole affair. Here, within this world of philosophers, he is a Socrates, Plato and Aristotle rolled into one. — **Nick Townsend**, *Independent on Sunday*.

Lightweight sculling

The Greeks, although they like their immortals, were perplexed by the God-like Matthew Pinsent's tears after he won his fourth successive Olympic gold in Athens' sweltering heat. — **Andrew Clavane**, *Sunday Mirror*.

Victory earned Matthew Pinsent, the crew's driving force, his fourth Olympic gold medal and lifted him close to the top of Mount Olympus. — **David Walsh**, *Sunday Times*.

A race fit for the Gods and another British oarsman ascending Mount Olympus… when Pinsent rows… elemental force is unleashed; when he cries, the plains flood… Like the ancient Olympians, Pinsent was left naked… the true destiny of the gold yesterday lay deep within the heart of the man with the physique and lung-power of Zeus himself… not a bad epitaph to a colossal career. — **Andrew Longmore**, *Sunday Times*.

Matthew Pinsent's garlanded seat on Mount Olympus is even nearer to the peak than most now. What became so awesomely clear soon after he planted his fourth Union Jack beside it is that the journey back down is going to be nearly as hard as the climb up… a mighty Olympian bound. — **John Dillon**, *Daily Express*.

Here in this ancient land of legends and myths, Pinsent had just carved out a special place for himself in the history of the Olympics. He had just written his own epic. — **Oliver Holt**, *Daily Mirror*.

Breast stroking

Our Olympics coverage leaves our rivals in the starting blocks. — *Daily Star*.

The Olympics were hotting up yesterday as some of the best-looking babes in the Games added spice to sport. Slovakia tennis smasher Daniela Hantuchova scored a couple of points as she warmed up for her gold medal bid. And sending temperatures sky high for male spectators were the bikini-clad beach volleyballers. — *Daily Star*.

She's the glamour girl of the British Olympics team and a red hot hope to strike gold in Athens… At 6ft 1ins, her striking model-girl looks were always going to guarantee the luscious longjumper — who is famously allergic to sand — plenty of attention. — *Daily Star*.

Britain's gold medal hope Pippa Funnell has left stuffy Olympic chiefs tongue-tied because her name is Greek slang for a sex act. Telly commentators have been banned from calling her Pippa after their bosses realised the name means "blow job" in Greek. — **Gary Nicks** ("exclusive"), *Daily Star*.

Shirley Robertson ruled the waves again to claim gold at her second successive Olympics yesterday. And this time the Scots stunner had the honour of leading her crew of blonde beauties to Britain's first gold medal of the Games. — **Kevin Francis**, *Daily Star*.

Gorgeous German sprinter Sina Schielke kicked off her Olympic campaign in style yesterday. But the leggy lovely is equally at home in her skimpy swimsuit, as revealed in this picture from the September issue of Germany's *Maxim* magazine. What a pity she failed to go through — she's one German we'd like to see more of! — *Daily Star*.

Olympic golden boy James Cracknell last night celebrated his win with a marathon sex session with his missus. — **Gareth Morgan** ("exclusive"), *Daily Star*.

The games may be a celebration of heroic achievement, but it's also an excellent opportunity to check out scores of well-packed Lycra lunchboxes… In Athens there are plenty of athletic fellas who can compete on the meat and two veg front, and some are more than worthy of a gold medal for excellence. — **Loma-Ann Bonner**, *Daily Star*.

Individual medley

Any Olympic Games would be lit up with either Thorpe or Phelps. That there are the two of them suggests an unheard of generosity from the gods of swimming. Poseidon must be in one of his rare good tempers in this sweltering Athenian August. — **Simon Barnes**, the *Times*.

Greece found it tough to get there on a day of anger, blackness and despair. The event was dominated by a Greek hero: but he wasn't actually with us. He had been involved in a Greek tragedy that was also a farce. — **Simon Barnes** on Kostas Kenteris, the *Times*.

Last night, I went to see Icarus and it was glory and wonder made flesh… In action, freckle faced and faintly ginger, he has the face of a rather severe soldier saint in the background of a Botticelli painting… He sprawled across the landing mat and ended up on his backside. Icarus had come down from the heights again. — **Simon Barnes** on US gymnast Paul Hamm, *Times*.

At one point, George Seferis, the great Greek poet, writes about how he gazed at the moon "dyed in the blood/of a young she-wolf". Good Lord, I thought. [Heptathlete] Carolina Kluft to the life. — **Simon Barnes**, *The Times*.

This is the story of the boat that was cursed by the gods, but somehow the hero prevailed in the end. It's not an original tale — it was all told in *The Odyssey* two millennia ago. But on Saturday it was told again as Matthew Pinsent led the Great Britain coxless four to a gold medal. At the end of it all, he broke down and wept, as Homeric heroes do on a regular basis; Odysseus himself was never far from tears. What had Pinsent done to offend the gods? Gods are notoriously touchy, as Odysseus learnt as the enmity of Poseidon pursued him for ten years. My own view is that the gods resented Pinsent's brilliance. — **Simon Barnes**, the *Times*.

Sport is trivial. — **Simon Barnes** on his job, the *Times*.

IS Dr Miriam Stoppard, the *Daily Mirror*'s agony aunt, in need of treatment?

When a desperate, out-of-work single mum wrote to her asking for advice after her seedy landlord suggested she could pay off her rent by working as a prostitute, Stoppard's advice was nothing short of flabbergasting.

Rather than refer the hapless "Mel" to a women's refuge or an organisation that helps women escape prostitution, Stoppard told her to "play the game". "Instead of fighting against her bad luck, she could turn it to her advantage. If temporarily she earned £200 a night plus her wages, then she could start saving."

After a couple of months' prostitution, predicted Stoppard, she could have enough to start looking for a "really good job" and "do a bit of flat hunting… The better she does it, the sooner she'll be shot of both him and this situation."

It would be comforting to think Stoppard's daily column had been ghost-written by a pissed old sub-editor, but her secretary assured the *Eye* Stoppard was responsible for it. However, she was currently in hospital and would respond to the *Eye*'s questions on her return. We look forward to hearing from her – and to be reassured that "Mel" isn't the only one prostituting her talents.

***BIG Issue* founder John Bird continues in his tireless quest to provide employment opportunities for the homeless – and members of his own family.**

In the past Bird has employed his daughter Diana to edit the *Big Issue LA* (now defunct), his son Paddy to head the Big Issue Film Unit (no longer in operation), and his ex-wife Tessa to head the company's international department (now closed).

Last week the company announced with much fanfare that Bird's new magazine *ITTIA* (I Think Therefore I Act), which aims to "reinvent thinking", will be edited by none other than his new wife, TV producer Parveen!

LABOUR CONFERENCE: FRINGE BENEFIT

LABOUR-friendly think tank the Social Market Foundation's timetable of fringe meetings at this year's Labour party conference in Brighton promises delegates a big business love-in.

Culture minister **Lord McIntosh** is due to speak about "gambling and regeneration" which, amazingly enough, is in keeping with Labour's policy of "helping" deprived areas by relaxing the licensing laws governing casinos. International casino firm **Sun International**, which wants to open at least four mega-casinos in rundown bits of Britain, will pay for the meeting.

(Sun International grew rich by running the Sun City resort in the "independent" South African homeland of Bophutswana, an impoverished region where apartheid rules about racial mixing and gambling were relaxed to the firm's great profit. **Peter Byrne**, a Sun International director, will speak from the platform alongside Lord McIntosh and Labour's Birmingham council leader **Sir Albert Bore**.)

Labour mercilessly (and successfully) mocked the Lib Dem candidate in the recent Birmingham Hodge Hill by-election, calling her Nicola "Nokia" Davies because of her day job working with the Mobile Phone Operators Association on planning regulations for mobile masts. But at its own conference environment minister **Alun Michael** is scheduled to speak about planning regulations and "community consultation" on a platform paid for by… **the Mobile Phone Operators Association**. The minister is sharing the platform with **Mike Dolan**, the association's executive director (and Nicola "Nokia" Davies's boss).

Health minister **John Hutton** meanwhile will address the question: "Can the private sector deliver public good for the NHS?" The answer is sure to be a resounding yes as the meeting is being paid for by Swedish health firm **Capio**, which recently won a £210m contract to carry out operations for the NHS. Capio president **Per Batelson** will also speak.

Meanwhile **Stephen Timms**, department of trade minister with responsibility for "corporate social responsibility", will speak on the subject on a platform paid for by **BUPA**, alongside the firm's chief spin doctor **Monica Owen**.

Pensions minister Malcolm Wicks is tabled to talk on the government's savings and pensions policy on a platform paid for by the **Royal London**, a pensions and savings firm, alongside the firm's PR chief **Gareth Evans**. (The Royal London is lobbying for better ways to make money from the government's "stakeholder" pensions. And in 2002 it was fined £400,000 and ordered to pay £15m compensation to holders of its defective pensions and savings plans.)

Treasury minister **Ruth Kelly** will talk about spiralling personal debt at a meeting sponsored by the **Finance and Leasing Association**, the trade body representing Britain's credit card, hire purchase and loan businesses, whose members control one third of British consumer debt. The association's director **Martin Hall** will also speak. (He condemned the office of fair trading's rules forcing credit card firms to admit that introductory low interest rates only last for a short time.)

Transport secretary **Alistair Darling** will discuss transport policy at a meeting entitled "moving on?" With no transport policy to speak of, this should be a very short talk. The meeting is sponsored by train firm the **Go Ahead group**, whose £342,000-a-year deputy chief executive **Chris Moyes** is on the top table.

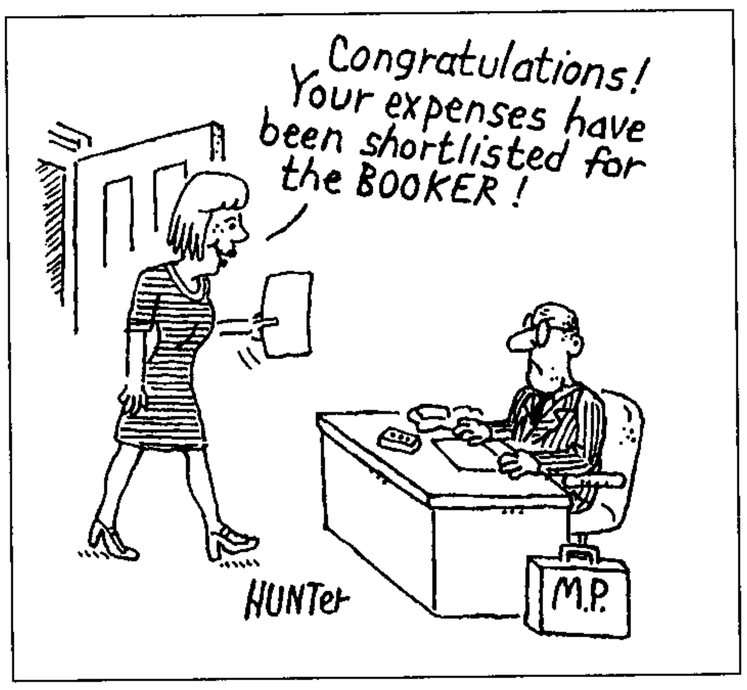
Housing Minister **Keith Hill** and **Oona King MP** will talk about housing for the "have nots" on a platform sponsored by the **British Property Federation**. Under Labour, council housing has shrunk, but the private builders represented by the federation, whose chief executive also sits on the platform, do not find filling the gap with cheap homes for "have nots" profitable.

Finally **Stephen Twigg MP** is inviting delegates to "think while they drink" at a reception paid for by the **British Nuclear Group**, a subsidiary of **BNFL**. Perhaps a few drinks will stop delegates thinking too hard about BNFL's state subsidies and history of atomic cock-ups.

DEMOB-happy Labour MP Jane Griffiths, recently deselected as candidate for Reading East, has sent a letter to a national charity explaining why she can't attend its fringe event at this year's party conference in Brighton.

"That week I will be on a beach on a Greek island," she reveals. "Frankly if you had the choice between Labour Party conference or a beach on a Greek island I am sure you would come to the same decision I have.

"I wish you well with your event and hope you enjoy conference. I am sorry but I cannot say I will be thinking of you whilst I am on the beach."



JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

July: Department for international development announces plan to provide treatment for two million more AIDS victims in Africa by the end of 2005.

August: Nursing and Midwifery Council reveals that the NHS has poached 11,000 nurses from African hospitals to work in UK in the last four years.

JUST FANCY THAT

YOU CAN tell a lot about a magazine and its readers by its advertisers… which bodes ill for the Conservative party and its desperate attempts to encourage younger people to join the cause.

The launch of Conservative Future attracted a lot of valuable publicity, and some new younger members, due to its crass CFUK branding. But the young ones must have been slightly startled then to receive their first copy of *Heartland*, the party's magazine.

It contained three advertising fliers which said more about the Conservative Future than any trendy new branding ever could. The first was for stair-lifts for the infirm; the second promoted an advancement in hearing aid technology; and the third promoted remedial mattresses and protective covers at bargain prices.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

HOW is the European Commission dealing with the EU's chronic level of VAT fraud? By keeping very quiet on the subject, that's how.

Back in May the European Accountants Federation set up a conference to try to solve the problem of the circuitous "carousel" operation. This complex ruse enables criminal gangs in one country to shift goods around the EU and sell them to consumers in another while charging them VAT. The gangs then avoid paying over the tax themselves by deregistering for VAT.

The accountants think European taxpayers are being fleeced to the tune of £60bn a year – equivalent to the entire VAT revenue from a country like France. The commission estimate is lower: it thinks 10 percent of the total in some countries might be going astray.

Either way the problem looks set to increase as border controls are eliminated with the 10 new member states. However, there has been no official announcement from the commission as to its plans. One insider revealed that a conference was held in Malta to seek ways to combat the problem… but its outcome is secret.

SHELL SCANDAL

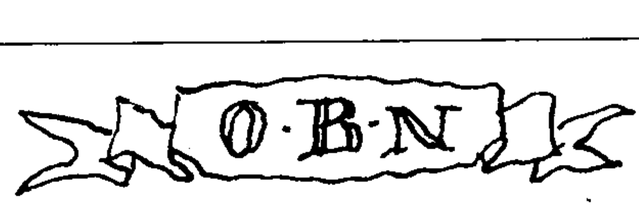
THE big corporate scandals of recent years spawned a number of worthy reviews but little in the way of new regulation. Notably, accountants are *still* allowed to provide lucrative consultancy services to the same companies they audit (as Arthur Andersen did for Enron), despite the obvious incentive this gives them to hush up problems.

The "market abuse" committed by the British-Dutch multinational Shell, which overstated oil reserves by several billions of pounds over a five-year period up to 2002, is a case in point. A report from the financial services authority (FSA) identifies a catalogue of failures behind the overstatements. These range from inappropriate policies on booking reserves (to encourage a more "entrepreneurial" approach) to a grossly understaffed internal audit function.

The FSA report does not mention, however, that the company's external auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers and KPMG, might have been expected to spot such important defects during their annual audits of the company, which should have considered in some detail how the reserves were measured and checked. Nor does the FSA indicate whether internal reports critical of the way Shell booked reserves were sent to the auditors by an insider, as the *Times* reported in July.

The FSA says it is continuing to review "other aspects of this matter". These may include the role of the external auditors. If so, the investigators might be interested to know that, as reported in *Eye* 1106, Shell's most recent accounts show that, while it was paying PwC and KPMG £25m for auditing, it was also handing them £35m in the same year for consultancy work.

PS: The £17m fine imposed on Shell by the FSA is intended to act as a deterrent, but it is less than half a day's profits for the company. The US financial regulator imposed a penalty of $120m.



It is too often forgotten that Cherie Blair is one of the most brilliant women of her generation. If she had never met Tony Blair she would now be a High Court judge or maybe a Cabinet minister…

PETER OBOURNE
Evening Standard

Submitted by J. James

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

LABOUR'S REVOLVING DOORS

THE trade in former ministers and officials, eagerly snapped up by a variety of companies, is growing, according to the latest report from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments.

The trade flourishes in the arms industry of course (see *Biggles fills his pockets*, *Eye* 1112), but it does not stop there.

Former socialist firebrand and ex-cabinet office minister **Lord Gus McDonald** is now the chairman of **MacQuarie Europe**. McDonald chaired the Scottish Media Group before being a minister, but Australian investment bank Macquarie is not especially media focused. Shortly before McDonald was appointed, however, it announced its plans to expand its British PFI investments.

Former education minister **Baroness Blackstone** is now a director of **Granada Learning**. A subsidiary of the ITV firm, it sells educational software to schools and an official "seal of approval" could help boost profits. As well as hiring Blackstone, Granada Learning also sponsors one of Tony Blair's "academy" schools in Liverpool. (As the *Eye* has already revealed, Blackstone has taken another job: expanding the educational business of, er, arms-maker **Vosper Thorneycroft**.)

Former transport minister **Stephen Byers** became an adviser to **Bergman's**, a northern lobbying firm that represents BAE Systems and the arms group, the UK Defence Forum. Strangely Byers does not list his work for Bergman's under the parliamentary register of members' interests.

Former Whitehall mandarins have also been doing well.

Sir Anthony Galsworthy, ex-ambassador to Beijing, now advises **BP China,** Labour's favourite oil firm. It has big investments in China, including money in Petrochina, a firm building a controversial pipeline in Tibet. In 2001 and 1999 Galsworthy helped welcome the Chinese president and vice-president on official visits to Britain, while pro-Tibet and pro-democracy protesters were nudged aside and hidden from view. On both occasions BP boss Lord Browne joined the official welcome, so Galsworthy's move is very much "business as usual".

Mike Granatt left his job as head of government communications at the cabinet office to become managing partner at **Luther Pendragon**, a lobbying firm whose clients include the Hinduja Group, Jarvis, McDonald's, Morgan Stanley, and... the cabinet office.

Vivian Brown, formerly chief executive of the Exports Credit Guarantee Department, is now a financial adviser to the **Bahraini minister of finance**. The ECGD currently gets the British taxpayer to guarantee £154,216,770 of business in Bahrain. Meanwhile **Sir David Wright**, once chairman of the government's main business support body, British Trade International, is now a director of **Balfour Beatty** and a vice-chairman of **Barclays**.

Tim Matthews, formerly head of the highways agency, is now managing director of US-owned **Parsons Brinckerhoff**, a firm chasing work with the... highways agency. **Dinah Nichols**, formerly a director-general at the department of the environment, is now a director of the **Pennon Group**, which operates South West Water and Viridor Waste Disposal – both heavily regulated by the department of the environment.

Former special adviser to Gordon Brown Chris Wales is now a managing director of **Goldman Sachs** and **Sir Richard Broadbent**, former chairman of Customs & Excise, is now a director of **Barclays**. **Sir Michael Scholar**, who was Stephen Byers' loyal permanent secretary at the DTI, has also taken the revolving door and is now a director of Legal & General, while top treasury civil servant **Steve Robson**, aka Mr Privatisation, is now an adviser to **KPMG**.

Two civil servants deserve a special mention. **Sir Stephen Lander** used to head MI5 and is supposed to become the boss of Britain's new FBI-style agency. However, he has been getting involved with high tech firms who would love to cash in on the business created by heightened security fears: he advises the board of **Detica Ltd**, an IT consultancy that boasts about its "national security" business. It claims to have been "supporting organisations involved in protecting the nation for more than 30 years". This includes work for the MoD and home office.

Lander is also a director of **Northgate Solutions**, a computer firm with a "criminal justice" business; and he also took a job as a consultant to **De La Rue**, which prints various bank and ID cards.

WAR ON TERROR

ON 12 August CACI Inc, a private contractor which runs a number of services for the US army in Iraq as well as various operations in the UK, released the preliminary findings of an internal investigation into the involvement of its staff in the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib jail.

The company was pleased to announce that it could not find "any credible or tangible evidence that substantiates the involvement of CACI interrogator personnel in the abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison or elsewhere in Iraq", and challenged the army to "provide the company with any information it has concerning misconduct by CACI personnel in Iraq".

Sadly for the company that was exactly what the army then did, with the release last week of an official review conducted by General George Fay, which concluded that CACI staff were "directly involved" in incidents where prisoners were treated violently or sexually humiliated, and on a number of occasions threatened with dogs.

Naturally none of this has stopped the company from picking up new contracts from the military in the meantime: on 10 August it was awarded a $15.3m deal to further extend its interrogation services in Iraq, and a week later the US Navy awarded the company a whopping £126m five-year contract to provide technical support for its IT systems.

Last week CACI ceo Jack London brushed off General Fay's conclusions, pointing out that "there certainly seems to have been plenty of confusion present about what interrogation methods were authorized and under what conditions" and insisting that "none of the behaviour alleged in the Fay report to have been committed by CACI employees, relates to anything close to the horrendous extremes seen in photographs and stated in the report: death, sodomy, rape, sexual assault, human piling, nakedness, hooding, etc." So that's all right, then.

LOST and stolen passports are the "greatest security problem", said Clark Kent Ervin, inspector general of the US department of homeland security while addressing a House of Representatives hearing on "A Terrorist's First Class Ticket" and the visa waiver programme.

Oddly he omitted to say that in the UK the organisation that loses more of these problem passports than any other is in fact the US embassy's own private contractor, Visa Delivery Service.

Its website advises that "because your documents are being handled by a secure courier delivery network with an office based in the US embassy, you can be sure they are in safe hands". But they aren't. VDS has lost around 30 passport-and-visa-waiver documents so far this year.

The special documents allow tourists and business travellers to enter the US without a visa for stays of up to 90 days. The department of homeland security has considered suspending the scheme because some countries do not have adequate procedures in place to prevent losses or even to notify US authorities when such losses occur. And once a passport is lost or stolen, anyone who finds it can gain easy access to the US with simple modifications to the passport because in many cases the US authorities aren't aware of the loss.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THERE must still be many people who, if asked what is achieved by the common agricultural policy (CAP), would reply that it pays European Union farmers to create huge food surpluses, such as those famous grain, beef and butter mountains.

Certainly that was true 20 years ago, when EU production subsidies played a leading part in building up a worldwide grain surplus equating to 123 days of world consumption – or more than twice as much as the UN's food and agriculture organisation then viewed as a safe minimum.

But over the years Brussels has been laboriously battling to reduce those surpluses, to the point where it has at last persuaded EU member states to end the link between subsidies and production altogether. As from this year, farmers will begin to be paid not for what they produce, but simply for the amount of land they farm.

The so-called "single farm payment" system has been hailed as a triumph, not least because it is linked to new rules which put keeping farmland in good environmental shape ahead of the need actually to grow anything on it.

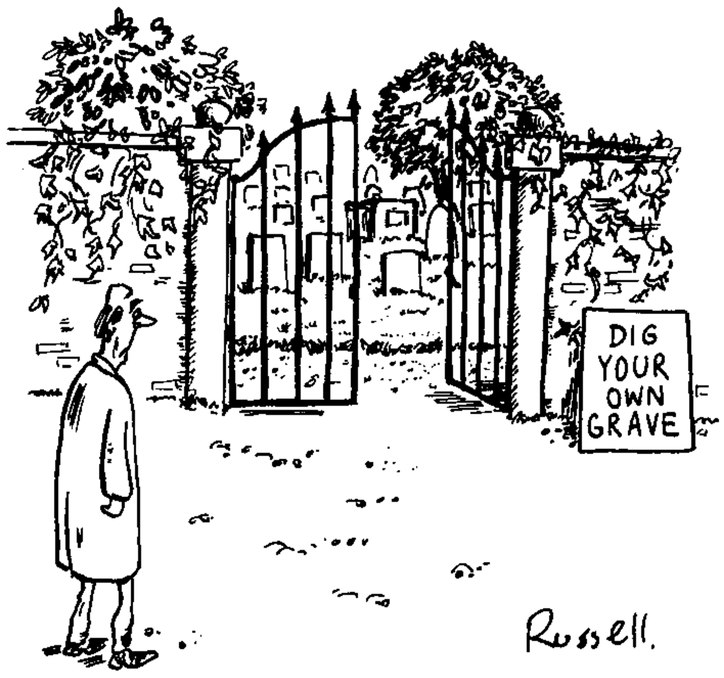
At just this moment when it has taken 20 years to turn the CAP supertanker in a new direction, however, comes the shattering news that, far from the world producing too much food, it is no longer producing anything like enough. The key to the looming crisis is the dramatically changing situation of China, with a quarter of the world's population, which for the first time in history this month became a net importer of grain.

The problem lies not just in China's fast-growing population and rapid industrialisation, but her desperate shortage of water. Only 12 percent of China's land area is suitable for agriculture, and 70 percent of this requires irrigation. But so much water has been taken away from the land for industrial and other uses, and so much of what remains is now dangerously polluted, that in just five years the area of land under cultivation has fallen from 92 million hectares to 76 million: a drop of more than a fifth.

The result is that, within five more years, experts predict, China will be having to import 50 million tons of grain annually, much more than any other country in the world. And this is at a time when the gap between the world's consumption and production has already widened to 105 million tons, more than 5 percent of production and the largest deficit ever recorded.

World grain stocks have now fallen to just 60 days of consumption, less than half the figure of 20 years ago, and ten days less than what the FAO now regards as providing necessary insurance against poor harvests and unpredictable weather. All this coincides with just the moment when the EU has at last "solved the problem of food surpluses", so that its own production is anticipated to be heading for a dramatic fall. In other words, just when the EU should be encouraging its farmers to raise production, to plug the yawning world deficit and ensure that Europe can continue to feed itself, Brussels is taking every possible step to encourage farmers to cut back.

'Muckspreader'



FIVE TV

Messiah 3 — The Promise (BBC1)

TELEVISION crime dramas are interested in being credible but it can be a risk if they become too real. An earlier instalment in the BBC's serial-killer franchise *Messiah* was postponed because its plot of child-murder coincided with the Soham killings. Perhaps for this reason, Messiah 3 – The Promise has a plot so lurid and ludicrous that only a full-scale fulfilment of the Book of Revelation could prevent it going out as scheduled.

DCI Red Metcalfe – the troubled visionary cop played by Ken Bones – is called to a prison siege where DI Kate Beauchamp – lonely adopted cop who has lost touch with her family – is being held hostage by locked-up psychopath Pace Tierney, who has used an interview visit by police as an excuse for a riot.

Tierney tries to cut a deal but Red sends in the riot police, leading to a shoot-out which leaves several inmates and warders injured. The casualties are rushed to the nearest hospital, at which point it becomes apparent that *Messiah 3* is aiming for the holy grail of BBC1 controllers: the police and medical series combined: *Holby Bill/Angel Z-Cars*.

Those admitted following the business at the nick begin to die in ingenious ways. Medical notes are switched so that an inmate who has only one kidney has his remaining organ removed when he's mistaken for a transplant patient. Psycho Tierney, who's nick-named Pace because he has a pace-maker, is shunted into the body-scanner where the machine interferes with his electrics and fries him. Subsequently, a patient known to have a peanut allergy is fed a nutty snack.

At the end of part one – *Messiah*, like many of its characters, is always cut into two pieces – DCI Metcalfe is forced to close the hospital, gloomily declaring that "only the relatives of the terminally ill" will be allowed in. Even in a notoriously bleak series, this is a notably downbeat moment.

Within this plot *Messiah 3* encompasses all the qualities which have made this drama

THROUGH
The Keyhole
WHERE THE BBC LOOKS AT SOMEWHERE SOMEONE HAS RESIDED FOR YEARS..
AND EVICTS HIM
Dear David, We're axing Breakfast with Frost love BBC
Ken Pyne

one of BBC1's few reliable annual returning franchises: a match for ITV's long-running *Prime Suspect* and *Crime And Punishment*.

First, there's the gore. Although it begins right on the watershed at 9pm, *Messiah* is startlingly violent. Within the first few minutes of this third outing, a woman is forced to bite on a large knife which is threatening to slash her face shortly before she is splashed with petrol and threatened with a match, a blazing fate which has already happened to another character. The trademark of *Messiah*, you see, is coming up with freshly clever and brutal ways for people to die.

If that idea sounds familiar, then you're right: *Messiah* is the bastard child of the movies *Seven* and *The Silence Of The Lambs*. Like them, it owes much of its power to mood, an effect largely achieved by failing to pay the electricity bill. Despite the fact that *Messiah 3* is set largely in a prison and a hospital – two institutions which are normally overlit because warders and inmates need to see what they're dealing with – most of the scenes take place in near-darkness. If DCI Metcalfe gets a torch for Christmas, there's no chance of a *Messiah 4*.

Most of the visual moments are borrowed from movie noir. Pace Tierney is first seen walking arms-crossed from the shadows at the back of a prison: a Hannibal Lecter motif. *Messiah 3* also succumbs to the all-time drama cliché of the moment in which an estranged stepfather and stepdaughter exchange glances, hinting – well, let's be clear, nudging us with an elbow in the face – at what might have gone on in the family home.

Then there's DCI Metcalfe. A cop with the ability to see into the minds of serial killers (*Seven* and *Lambs*, again), he's been fitted out with grief for a dead brother and, presumably because it's becoming so hard to distinguish these anguished middle-aged cops from each other, a deaf-mute American wife. The sign-language stuff was previously done by Richard Curtis but at least that wasn't in a grisly thriller.

Even so, watching *Messiah 3* you do wonder how it's managed to make such a killing. If he ever got sick of tracking unusually ingenious murderers, DCI Metcalfe might like to investigate the job-lot of stolen crime-drama clichés dumped on his own doorstep.

'Remote Controller'

AD NAUSEAM

THE Olympic ideal is all very well, but the real winners at great sporting events are the marketing men. So it has been one of the silent pleasures of this year's competition to see Nike's campaign fail to get out of the blocks.

First it shot an ad featuring Marion Jones, winner of five medals in Sydney. Alas, Ms Jones then became embroiled in an investigation by the US anti-doping agency and assumed a low profile in Athens.

Then there was a global spot showing a group of teenage girls turning into Serena Williams in a bid to impress their sexy tennis coach. Unfortunately, it broke first in Australia, where Gavin Hopper, a well-known tennis coach who had worked with both Monica Seles and Mark Philipoussis, had just been jailed for indecently assaulting a 14-year-old girl.

Still, if the Olympics haven't been Nike's greatest triumph at least there's still football… *Whoops!* Nike sponsors Wayne Rooney, once a marketing dream; but after the recent discovery of his predilection for brothels, now something of a public relations timebomb.

2.00–6.00 AM BBC Learning Zone Mediterranean Season

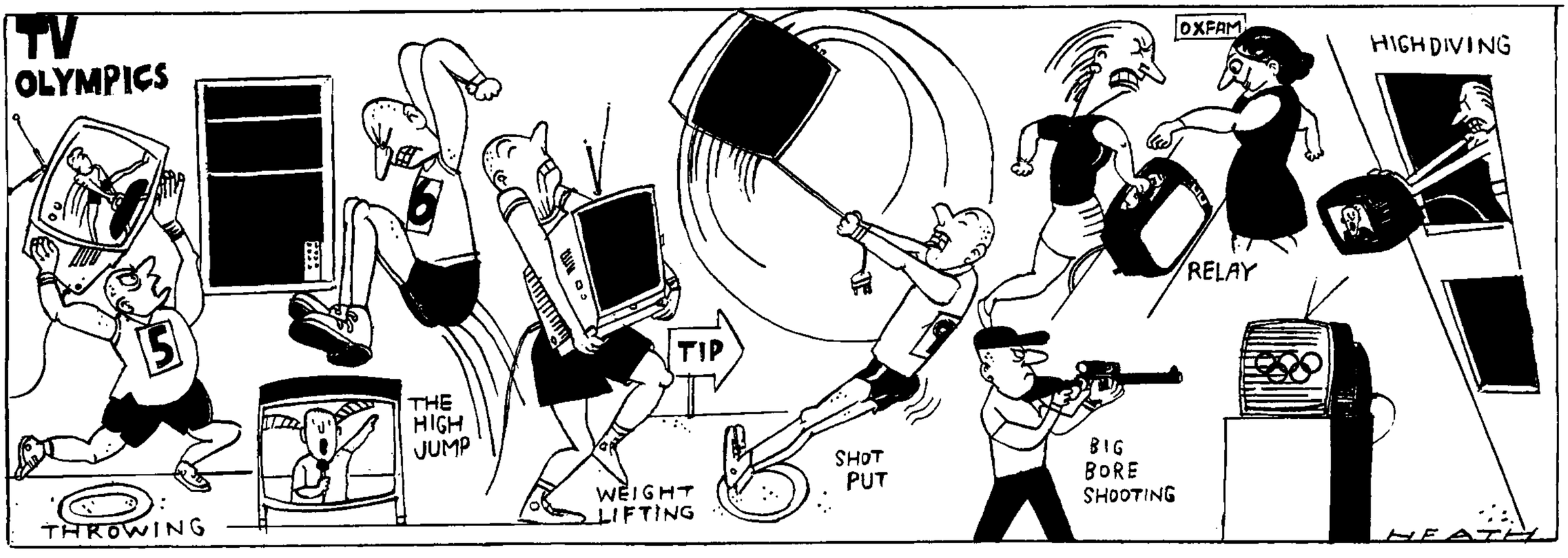
Radio Times

IN 1987, not long after Michael Jackson had bought the rights to the Beatles' publishing catalogue, he accepted a large wad of cash from trainer company Nike to use their song "Revolution" in a TV advert.

Yoko Ono joined the three living members of the band in legal action against the company, claiming through lawyers that "the Beatles want to stop advertisers from jumping on the bandwagon by trying to sell their products by associating with the Beatles and their music. They don't sing jingles to sell sneakers or panty-hose or any other product." The case was eventually settled out of court four years later.

Last week Nike announced that it would be selling a special edition John Lennon version of their Converse sneakers, modelled on those worn by the singer on the cover of the Beatles Abbey Road LP, and decorated with lyrics from his song "Imagine", "designed with the help of Yoko Ono."

Ono claims she was attracted by the company's "longstanding commitment to achieving world peace" and promise to donate a "significant percentage of pre-tax sales to peace education causes" – cash which will no doubt be boosted by the company's use of subcontracted sweatshop labour in countries like Thailand and Indonesia, where Oxfam recently reported that staff are forced to work 18-hour shifts for wages that are too low to live on. But then maybe that's what Lennon meant by "imagine no possessions"!



MEDIA NEWS

THINGS seem pretty relaxed at the BBC in August to judge by author Freddie Forsyth's appearance on *Newsnight* last week to promote his mercenary interests.

The right-wing pundit was invited on to discuss the role of private military companies (aka mercenaries) in the modern world and was introduced by Kirsty Wark as the author of *Dogs of War*, his 1970s novel on a coup in a fictional African state. But *Newsnight* failed to mention its guest's other, much closer links to the twilight world of PMCs.

Forsyth was soon eulogizing over controversial hired gun Lt Col Tim Spicer's mercenary operation in Sierra Leone in 1997. "Non national soldiers in the form of Sandline, men under the control of Tim Spicer, long before the British got involved, deposed the brutal Fody Sanko," he waxed.

This was an unusual interpretation of Spicer's intervention in Sierre Leone, which later became known as the Sandline Affair (and threatened the job of then foreign secretary Robin Cook). But Forsyth and Spicer know each other well. As *Eye* 1111 revealed, Forsyth is a shareholder in Spicer's company Aegis Defence Systems Ltd. Freddie's shares amount to £4 of the £100 share issue. But since Aegis won a mammoth $293m contract to supply security in Iraq, his initial investment has undoubtedly paid off.

Forsyth was himself once accused of organizing a coup – which failed – in Equatorial Guinea back in 1973. He was fingered by one of the mercenaries whose plot was aborted following their arrest in Spain. It was claimed that Freddie was planning to set up Equatorial Guinea as a base for the defeated Biafran faction in the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war. In March this year, Forsyth admitted to the *Independent on Sunday* knowing the mercenaries and being present at some of the plot meetings; but he denied involvement, saying he was merely researching *Dogs of War*.

It's all a bit incestuous in the world of mercenaries, however. Spicer is a friend of former SAS officer and old Etonian Simon Mann, who currently stands accused of trying to overthrow Equatorial Guinea's President Obiang and liberate its recently discovered oil wealth. As the arrest of Mark Thatcher in South Africa indicates, the key "investors" appear to be a group of right-wing adventurers around the Thatcher family, several of whom have yet to be exposed.

GOING LIVE

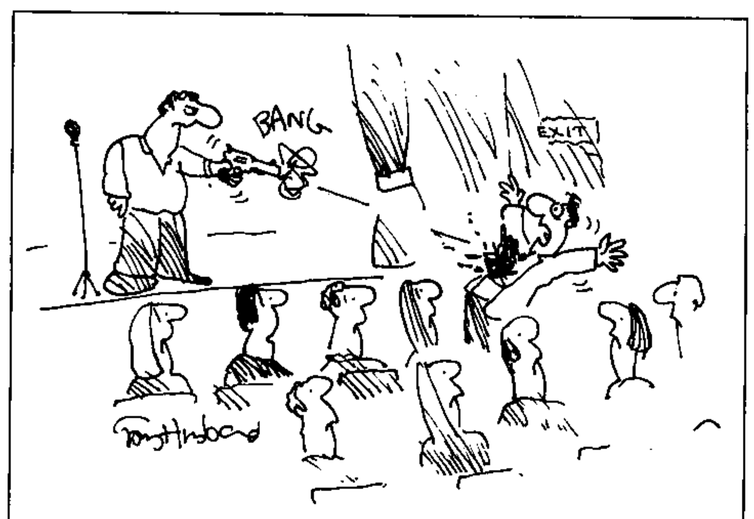
RED faces all round when BBC Radio's Five Live went to gold medal winner Roger Black for the latest on the Athens Olympics.

"What's it like in Athens tonight, Roger?"

"Actually I'm not in Athens, but in the front room of a friend's house in Guildford. I've been dropped from the BBC team in Athens," came the reply.

And when *Channel Four News* went live on 26 August to Simon Israel for the latest on Abu Hamza's extradition case, it was barely more enlightening. "So Simon, what do you know?" asks Krishnan Gury-Murthy.

"Well, not a lot, to be honest."



"Well, I've seen wittier ways of shutting up hecklers"

OUT OF CON-TEXT

***SCOTSMAN* reviewer Kate Copstick was scathing about comedian Jason Wood's show *Being Glorious* at the Edinburgh Festival, calling it "a lazy, self-satisfied display of what can only be described as toxic camp" and awarding it one star out of a possible five.**

Undeterred, Wood's PR company Emma Turner Press and Publicity created new posters complete with the quote "A Star – Kate Copstick, *Scotsman*".

DUMB BRITAIN

Simply The Best, ITV

Phil Tufnell: How many Olympic Games have been held?

Contestant: Six!

PT: Higher!

Contestant: Five!

The Vault, ITV

Gaby Logan: What Scottish town is known as the Granite City?

Contestant: Stockholm.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Which novel by Joseph Heller starts with the words "It was love at first sight..."?

Contestant: Anna Karenina.

AR: Which B completes the title of this book written by Lord Baden-Powell: "Scouting For..."?

Contestant: Business.

Number crunching

55 ■ Number of residents airlifted out of Boscastle by RAF after flooding

35 ■ Number of BBC staff flown into Boscastle on special charter flights after flooding

HIGH PRINCIPALS

EVER since he blew the whistle on more than half a million pounds worth of improper claims for European grants by the Northern Film School (NFS), lecturer Jim Hemmingway has been victimised by some of his fellow staff and bosses.

His case is now being used to spearhead a call for a national policy on "public interest disclosures" in higher education to protect whistleblowers.

The NFS, based at Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU), was forced to pay back £519,104 to the European social fund in 2002 after Mr Hemmingway alerted the government office for Yorkshire and the Humber that the university appeared to be paying a 10 percent cut of its European social fund grant to Warwick-based consultants J&AB Associates, as a consultancy fee for making successful grant applications on the university's behalf.

Auditors were called in to investigate and found that a great deal of money needed to be repaid. LMU accepted that it had been in the wrong and coughed up. However, as word got out that it was Mr Hemmingway who had made such a saving to the public purse, his managers began to make his working life "intolerable".

Mr Hemmingway's case has been taken up by MP Fabian Hamilton, who raised the case in an adjournment debate last month, detailing the university's failure to protect the lecturer or to deal with his complaints about bullying through the grievance process, noting that "in spite of denials by the university that Jim Hemmingway has been victimised, the evidence contradicts their assertion".

THE Doncaster Education City project aims to meet "learners' needs and aspirations through excellence" in partnership with the University of Hull. However, the project is in some financial trouble.

Many lecturers are paid less than 60 percent of the going rate in comparable institutions, while the top tier get massive salaries and freebies. Budgets throughout the college – including library services – have been frozen for months. Teaching vacancies are unfilled as a skeleton staff struggle to provide an adequate educational experience for a particularly deprived group of students. But all is not lost. The college governing body recently approved the purchase of a new black BMW X5 at a cost of £37,000 for DEC Chief Executive George Holmes, complete with a £700 personalised number plate: CEO 4 DEC. Who needs books?

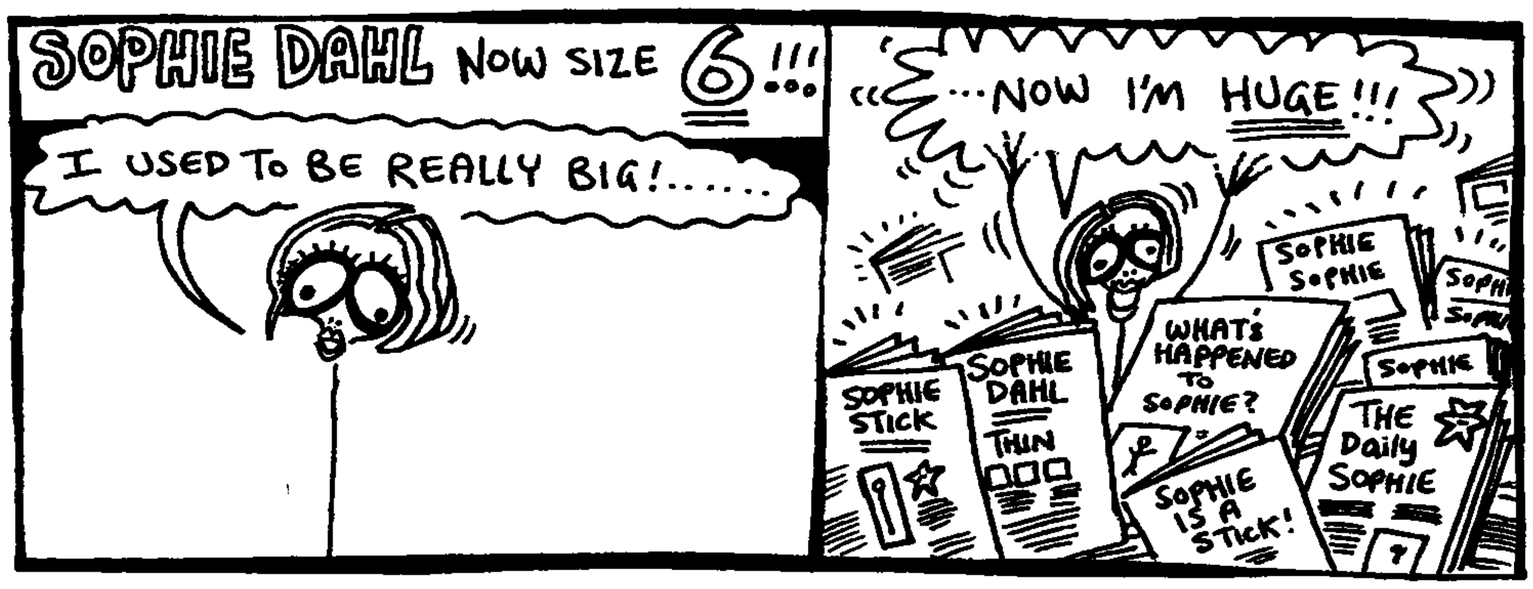
EYE TOLD YOU SO

FLEET STREET papers including the *Guardian*, *Mail*, *Telegraph*, *Independent* and *Express* all had fun with news that Doncaster's elected mayor Martin Winter and deputy Aidan Rave had recently spent £1,200 of council taxpayers' money on a one-day public speaking course at Rada.

None of this would have surprised readers of the *Eye*'s Rotten Boroughs column, however, which reported how Winter first booked a course at Rada almost a year ago (*Eye* 1089).

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



DOING THE ROUNDS

M.D.'s recent return to general practice seems an apt time to reflect on the state of the NHS. It isn't national, it's not a coherent service and it's got very little to do with health.

Patients still come in with ear wax and self-limiting illness, and about half of them are overweight. Some of those who need referral onwards are sent to privately-owned treatment centres, often without their GP's knowledge. Even though it's our duty to make sure patients get a good service, we're given no information as to the safety and quality of the treatment. But at least it's quicker.

Like the rest of the NHS, general practice itself is being carved up into hundreds of individual tasks which can then be individually coded and costed as a prelude to privatisation. In theory, GPs can then choose whether they wish to do a task for the price offered (eg monitor patients on blood-thinning drugs); but in order to claim the fee, they have to stick to strict protocols and keep meticulous, repetitive records.

If they choose to opt out, their local primary care trust (PCT) is obliged to open the market to other providers, often private, who think they can do the job at that price. The results are predictable: companies will cherry pick easy cases but complicated ones will get bounced back to the GP.

GPs could refuse, but in practice it's hard to turn down a distressed and confused elderly patient with multiple illnesses and tablets who is in danger of having a major bleed if she gets the dose of warfarin wrong. In a sense, GPs have for decades been their own worst enemies by providing an extensive, holistic but largely unmonitored service much cheaper than any private company could do. And although a majority of GPs signed up to their new contract, many did so for the chance of opting out of 24-hour responsibility for their patients, rather than a desire to anally document and claim for each of the vast range of tasks they've been doing anyway since the inception of the NHS.

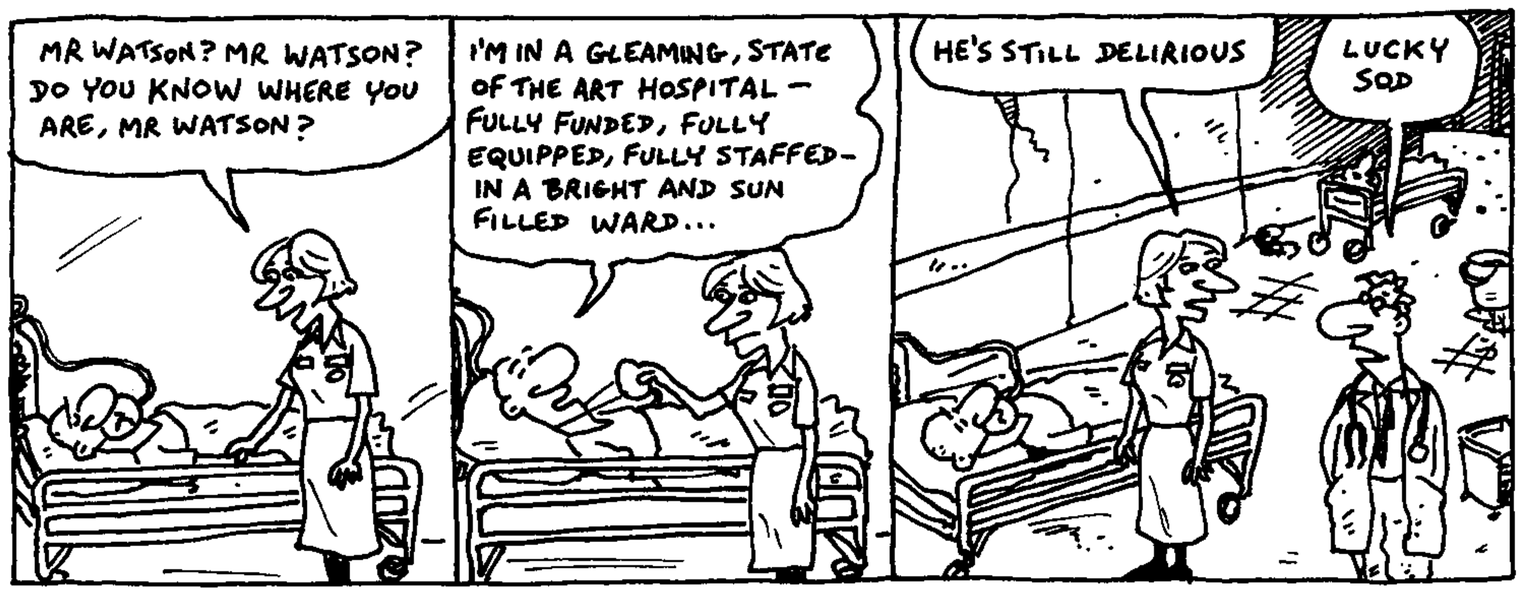
"New" Labour's NHS has become entirely preoccupied with treating diseases, modifying risks and counting all there is to count. It's a huge and expensive effort for often marginal benefits. Many patients benefit from simply having someone who listens and accepts them as they are. Most GPs hate being judgmental and forcing medicalisation on people who don't want it because study after study shows it doesn't work (for example, only a third of patients on long-term medication take it properly). Patients want more face-to-face time with GPs, but they're getting less, and consultations are now interrupted with "We'd better just pop you on the scales" and "Do you mind if I just check your blood pressure?" It then takes another five minutes putting all these numbers into the appropriate computer template to claim the fee for measuring them.

GPs now see fewer patients than they used to and fill the time with administrative and management tasks to justify their value to the government. But the true value of what they do has always been rooted in empathy and support and all the other fluffy things that "new" Labour can't measure. All the extra investment in the NHS is giving us a lot more numbers to count and regale come election time, but I doubt patients are getting much healthier and the GPs are grumpy as hell at being forced to administer a style of doctoring they don't believe will work. Apart from that, it's great to be back.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY


MR WATSON? MR WATSON? DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE, MR WATSON?
I'M IN A GLEAMING, STATE OF THE ART HOSPITAL – FULLY FUNDED, FULLY EQUIPPED, FULLY STAFFED – IN A BRIGHT AND SUN FILLED WARD...
HE'S STILL DELIRIOUS
LUCKY SOD

SIGNAL FAILURES

Down the tubes

AFTER derailments on the tube lines it runs at Chancery Lane, Hammersmith and Camden Town last year, Metronet responded with a vigorous PR offensive.

Hosting a safety conference at the Euston Novotel hotel in November, chairman John Weight declared: "Quite simply, our commitment is non-negotiable; it [safety] comes top on our priority list; and it will not be compromised – under any circumstances. I cannot be clearer than that."

Six months later Metronet compromised safety in the most blatant way. A report just published by London Underground reveals that safety measures imposed on Metronet at 42 locations following the Camden Town derailment were not implemented properly, leading to another derailment at White City in May. The investigators' White City report points to serious management failings, including "a lack of management control" and "a lack of supervision to ensure that those measures were being implemented effectively".

None of this has done the firms behind Metronet any harm. In April, one of the main consortium members, Balfour Beatty, won a contract worth more than half a billion pounds to renew Network Rail's tracks in the Southern and East Anglian regions; and another consortium member, WS Atkins, continues to land millions of pounds worth of public contracts.

Metronet chairman John Weight, meanwhile, remains strangely quiet, reflecting perhaps that, when it comes to tube safety, actions speak louder than words.

Apex of absurdity

AIRLINE-style Apex tickets are still being touted to rail passengers although they're incompatible with Network Rail's short-notice maintenance regime.

Apex was one of British Rail's last new products, offering modest discount for long-distance passengers prepared to book at least a week ahead and use reserved seats on specified trains. The privatised railway has stretched the concept to absurdity so it can advertise eye-catching fares – while normal fares rocket upwards.

Apex is now even available for local journeys of 60 miles or under, and is the only affordable fare for many people because the gap between Apex and normal fares is so wide. (Liverpool-London: £11 Apex, £51 Saver single, £85 open single.)

Apex tickets sell out fast, as small numbers of seats per train are allocated. None are available on many peak-period trains to ensure everyone pays top dollar, even if that means carrying empty seats.

People are happy to buy airline Apex tickets because they fly only occasionally and can often tailor their holidays to cheap flights. But the rail network is provided, at substantial cost to the taxpayer, to meet everyday travel needs. Booking ahead isn't an option for most people, especially as it's sometimes hard to predict which train will be needed for the return journey.

Moreover, line closures for maintenance have long been a fly in the Apex ointment: some companies refused to sell Apex tickets if buses replaced trains for part of the journey, as they couldn't reserve seats on buses or be sure a bus would arrive in time for a specified train departure. So passengers paid higher fares for the privilege of being messed about.

That perversity is now a common feature of train travel. Network Rail ignores the rule that passengers must have at least 12 weeks' notice of line closures. And closures are becoming so common that even staff can be unsure of the service to be provided. Last weekend NR closed at least seven sections of railway for maintenance.

Apex should be the counterweight to sky-high normal fares but the rail industry isn't keeping to its side of the deal. With NR soon to get more control while having no direct relationship with passengers (*Eye* 1111), an epidemic of line closures at weekends and holidays may be coming. Uncertainty and tedious replacement buses are bad enough for passengers without them battling for weeks for Apex tickets and then paying through the nose. The decent thing in the circumstances would be to make normal tickets affordable and offer Apex tickets only for long-distance routes, at marginal discount. But why would rail companies that exist to churn out profits do the decent thing when they can exploit the chaos instead?

● Most feeble excuse of the week for a poor performance by a rail company comes from Scotrail. Recent delays at Irvine in Ayrshire were according to Scotrail due to Hurricane Alex, a storm which recently devastated parts of Florida in the United States.

'Dr B. Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

THE PEOPLE of Nottinghamshire can take heart that in Cllr Colin Bromfield they have a good and faithful servant who does not believe in working a mere 9-to-5 day on their behalf.

Indeed, such is his dedication that the county councillor was making business calls to Siberia on his mobile phone last Christmas Day, starting just after midnight. His council expenses show he made a further two calls that day to the same number, followed by a further three on Boxing Day.

In all Cllr Bromfield made 51 calls to the number between September 2003 and January 2004, five of them after midnight – when it would be between 6am and 7am in Siberia. He also phoned Siberia from a conference in France he was attending on council business.

The council has had links with the Russian town of Chelyabinsk since 1996, advising authorities there how to develop a voluntary sector to work with the disabled. Cllr Bromfield, who is cabinet member for culture at the Labour-controlled authority, has visited Chelyabinsk several times on official business. But the town he was calling at Christmas, Zelengorsk, is hundreds of miles away.

There were another 11 business calls to other Russian numbers, bringing the total bill for taxpayers to more than £340. In August 2003 the council paid £682 for his air ticket to Russia on official business. It paid £190 for a civic car, £621 for accommodation, almost £250 for subsistence and £432 for a translator. That translator was one Irina Postikova. It is expected that a council investigation currently underway will find that the Siberian number which Cllr Bromfield was wont to call after midnight, and that of Ms Legova, are one and the same.

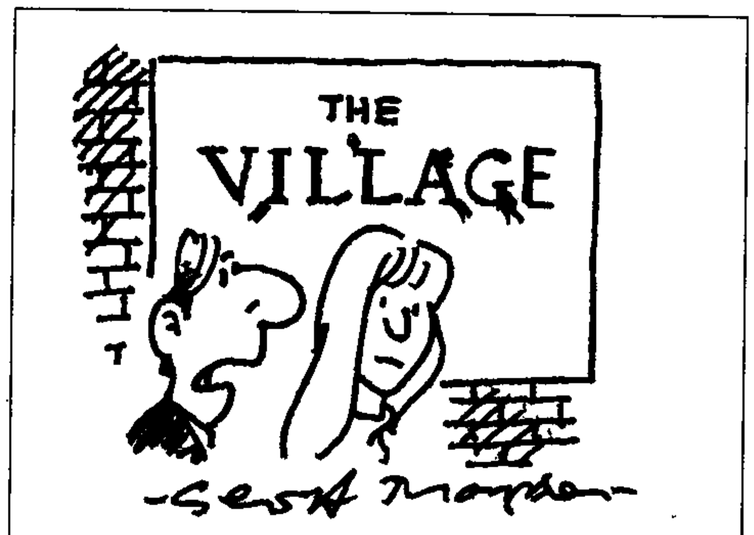
HARE-BRAINED

PRIVATISATION has been all the rage among councils for years. Now a member of Bedford borough council has taken things a step further – by charging council taxpayers for advice.

Unfortunately Cllr Tony Hare's advice is not much good. He told widow Vera Barnett, 77, who with her late husband had tended a patch of vacant council-owned land adjacent to their garden in the village of Keysoe for some 50 years, that she could stake a claim for ownership of the land after the council ordered her to vacate it. The "Rural Alliance" councillor charged Mrs Barnett £1,000 to represent her at a land registry hearing – which she lost. She must now pay the council's legal costs of £18,535. She does not have the money and fears she may be sent to prison. Her DIY lawyer had not advised her she would be liable for costs if she lost.

In another case last month Cllr Hare was ordered to pay £1,466.40 costs to Ken Butterworth, whom he had advised over an action against a financial training company. After Mr Butterworth won his case, Cllr Hare slapped in a bill for £2,715, although Mr Butterworth had understood his advice was free.

Cllr Hare, who is unemployed and has no legal qualifications, did not respond to the *Eye*'s calls last week.



"Scary! No post office, no pub, no bus service..."

PRICE OF PREJUDICE

DESPITE the ruling of an employment tribunal that Unison shop steward Alex Owolade (*Eyes passim*) was unfairly dismissed by Lambeth council for drawing attention to concerns about racism in the housing department, and should be reinstated in October, the council's ruling Lib Dem-Tory administration is reluctant to comply.

The council's mulishness has already cost council taxpayers dear. It has been ordered to pay Mr Owolade nearly three years back pay with interest at 7 percent, plus £5,000 for injury to his feelings. When legal fees and officer time are added, the cost to the council of fighting the case is likely to exceed £250,000 – and there's an even bigger bill for last year's public inquiry into Owolade's allegations.

Lambeth chief executive Faith Boardman claims Owolade would not be welcomed back by other staff, but the facts say otherwise. Fourteen managers who would come into the closest contact with Owolade on his return, including his direct line manager, wrote to the ET panel saying they would welcome him back. A 14,000 strong petition calling for Owolade's reinstatement was recently handed to Lambeth (and ignored). It contained 1,000 signatures from council employees. Last year a public inquiry into racism within Lambeth's emergency wardens service concluded that Owolade had been right all along — the service had indeed been riddled with racism.

Only in July a full meeting of the council unanimously passed a motion which stated: "The council will not victimise members of staff who make complaints of racial harassment or discrimination." Unless, apparently, their name is Alex Owolade.

● RED FACES in Winchester, where the city council's sale of two plots of land to a housing association which wanted to build hostels for ex-offenders and single mothers has ended in disarray.

The fiasco dates back to 2002, when the Lib Dem council misled locals by conducting a bogus consultation on "affordable housing" on the two sites. When Winchester's mean-spirited, sorry, honest citizens found out about the real plan there were howls of protest. The scheme, which would have attracted a hefty government grant, was scrapped and council leader Sheila Campbell was forced to apologise.

The Eastleigh Housing Association is now lumbered with the two sites, for which it paid the council £511,000. And it has discovered that one of them – at the end of a cul-de-sac with very restricted parking – has been ruled as unsuitable for development by, er, Winchester council planners.

A six-month period in which the council would have been obliged to buy back the sites if anything went wrong has elapsed. The council is taking legal advice on whether it has any financial – never mind moral – obligation to the housing association.

At the end of day the vulnerable people are still being housed in unsuitable flats, the city is left with at least one useless site, a six-figure government grant has been lost and the council risks falling out with a key public housing partner. Well done, Winchester!

CLATT'S YOUR LOT

ONE DAY last month 91-year-old Mary Clatt was standing outside her flat near London's Old Kent Road when a gust of wind blew the front door shut, locking her out.

Mrs Clatt, who suffers from angina, arthritis and asthma and had recently come out of hospital following a hip replacement, asked a neighbour to phone Southwark council's 24-hour emergency warden service so she could be let her back into her flat, part of a sheltered housing scheme.

The operator told the neighbour, Iris Bainbridge, that Mrs Clatt would have to wait eight hours for help because there was no "emergency". In fact it might have become one, given that the old lady was cut off from her asthma inhaler and heart medication. After giving Mrs Clatt tea and sympathy for eight hours, Mrs Bainbridge called again and was told help was on the way. No one came. Mrs Bainbridge phoned a third time. While she explained how desperate the situation had become the line went dead. She had been cut off. A council worker arrived to let Mrs Clatt back into her flat nine hours after she was locked out.

Four days earlier Southwark council's executive had agreed cuts to the emergency warden service, which will affect all 23 sheltered schemes across the borough. Two days later the audit commission issued its latest assessment of the council's performance. Classified as "weak" in 2002 and "fair" in 2003, the commission now rates Southwark "good" and commends it for "sustained improvement" in social services. Heaven help the borough's oldies if it ever becomes "excellent"!

EDUCATION NEWS

UNDER the Fresh Start scheme the struggling Marina High School in Brighton was closed down in 2000, rebuilt by Jarvis through a private finance initiative scheme and renamed "Comart", the supermarkety-sounding shortening of East Brighton College of Media Arts.

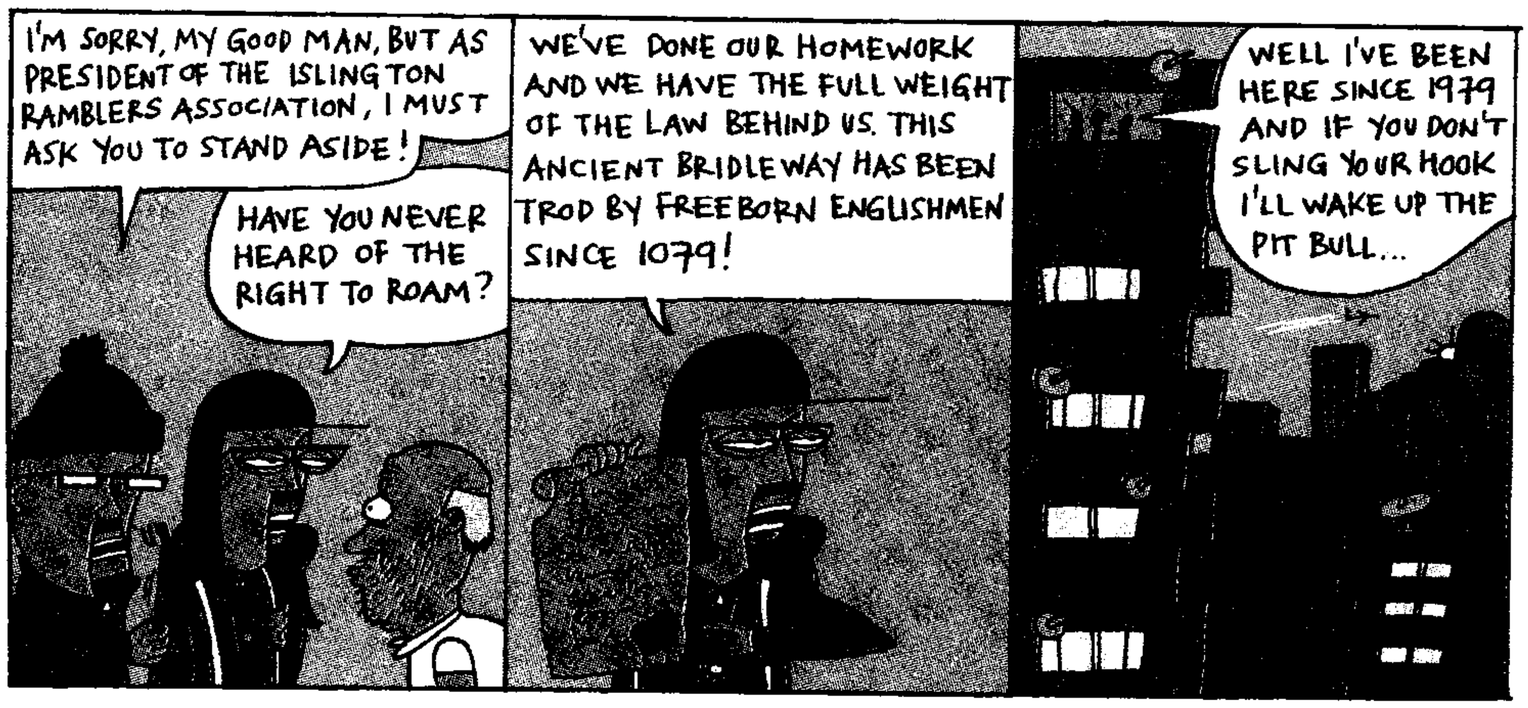
When the new school year begins this year, it will be for the last time. In July 2005 Comart will close permanently thanks to its unpopularity with parents. The remaining 400-plus pupils will have to be found places at other local schools.

The closure is a blow for the rather improbable theory that renaming a failing school and making it specialise in trendy subjects will fix core problems for schools in deprived areas. It's also a huge blow to Brighton's education budgets.

The council faces a financial penalty for cutting the 25-year PFI contract short. And after a £246m loss last year, Jarvis desperately needs to satisfy its banks: it will be keen to squeeze every last penny in compensation out of the project. The final cost of closure could be more than £15m. Playing field land attached to the school is likely to be sold to help cover this.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

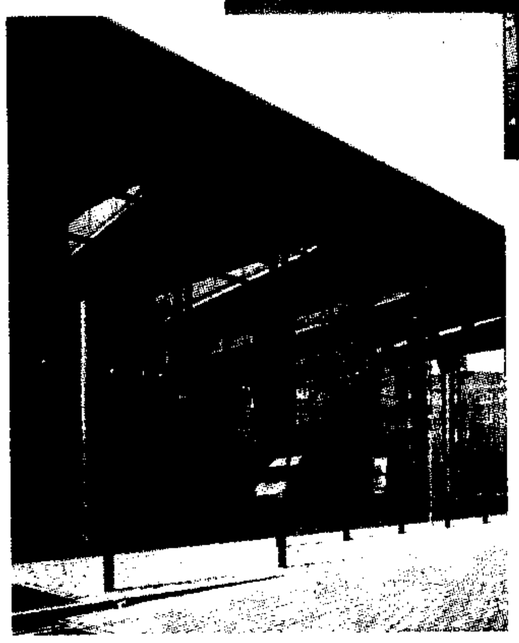
KNIFE & PACKER


I'M SORRY, MY GOOD MAN, BUT AS PRESIDENT OF THE ISLINGTON RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION, I MUST ASK YOU TO STAND ASIDE!
HAVE YOU NEVER HEARD OF THE RIGHT TO ROAM?
WE'VE DONE OUR HOMEWORK AND WE HAVE THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE LAW BEHIND US. THIS ANCIENT BRIDLEWAY HAS BEEN TROD BY FREEBORN ENGLISHMEN SINCE 1079!
WELL I'VE BEEN HERE SINCE 1979 AND IF YOU DON'T SLING YOUR HOOK I'LL WAKE UP THE PIT BULL...

NOOKS and CORNERS

HERE is a silly building for the silly season: the Clissold Leisure Centre in Hackney, designed by Hodder Associates of Manchester and Stephen Hodder, a pouting, macho, Norman Foster-wannabe who does fashionable, cutting-edge High Tec buildings.

Naturally Hodder has been showered with praise and prizes, and a knighthood cannot be far behind. Meanwhile, the firm's website is a joy: "The work of the practice seeks a future in the extension of transformation of the modern tradition wherein recurring themes of space, composition of form, proportion, light and materiality are explored within a strong framework which is concerned with context and the making of buildings. The acknowledgement of the Modern tradition is therefore not merely a stylistic matter but one which stems from its very being" [*sic*].



The firm also boasts of its ability to "establish close and pro-active working relationships with clients" and "to deliver to tight deadlines". Oh dear.

Work began on replacing the old Clissold Baths in 1997. Hodder had first made his name with a swimming pool and the new building with its "gleaming aluminium roof" was to herald a new era in sports centre design. It is a concrete framed building "enclosed within a clear span steel framed, glass and aluminium clad envelope." Even the flume was designed in a cool, minimalist manner: "'As architects, we're quite pure about space,' says Hodder. 'But a flume is a necessary evil'."

The original estimate was for £11.3m (£8m coming from the lottery) and the building was to open in 1999. In fact it cost £31m and was completed in March 2001 but only opened to the public in March 2002. Even then it was plagued with "teething troubles" and, after the electrical plant rooms flooded, the Clissold Leisure Centre was closed in November 2003 (see *Eye* 1100). It remains closed.

The London borough of Hackney is now taking legal action against the architects and some of their consultants. The defects in the building identified by the council includes widespread leakages and excessive condensation as well as the cracking of the squash court walls and "gap at curved roof eaves". Many of these failures seem due to missing waterproof membranes and finishes, but there are problems with the design too: "Water slide structure prevents safe use of the spa pool at its base" and "inadequate privacy to female changing rooms."

Mr Hodder has been robust in his defence. While he admits there are problems, he insists many stem from "the way the building was handled", that little is wrong with the building structurally and that it need not have been closed. He thinks that "it would take very little to get it back and open again. Perhaps it would cost something in the region of £500,000." Well, that is really good news for the ratepayers of Hackney.

HISTORY repeats itself. Once upon a time, in the 1930s, there was a pair of Regency semi-detached villas in Maida Vale, one half of which was lived in by Dorothy Warren Trotter, a well-known gallery owner and interior decorator who ran the Londoners' League.

One day she woke up to find that the other half of the building had been bought by Mr Rudolph Palumbo, who proceeded to demolish it and replace it with a block of flats, leaving Mrs Trotter's house looking pretty silly, with just half of the central pediment standing. After that, she referred to "The Mutilated House" as her address.

Mr Bill Johnson bought a semi-detached house in Morningside Drive, East Didsbury, Manchester, when it was new in 1948 and has lived there ever since. The semi-detached pair is not quite up to the quality of the villa in Maida Vale but it is a perfectly decent, symmetrical building in the traditional suburban "By-Pass Variegated" style. Mr Johnson has now discovered that the other half, the mirror-image of his house, has been bought by Messrs Wainhomes, who propose to demolish it to make an access road to a development of 99 flats on green-belt land behind.

If planning permission for the development is granted by Manchester city council it will leave Mr Johnson's house looking rather stupid, and he does not know if work will have to be done to make his party wall into an exterior wall. When asked why the firm had not approached Mr Johnson before proposing to mutilate his house, a spokesman for Wainhomes replied "Why should we?"

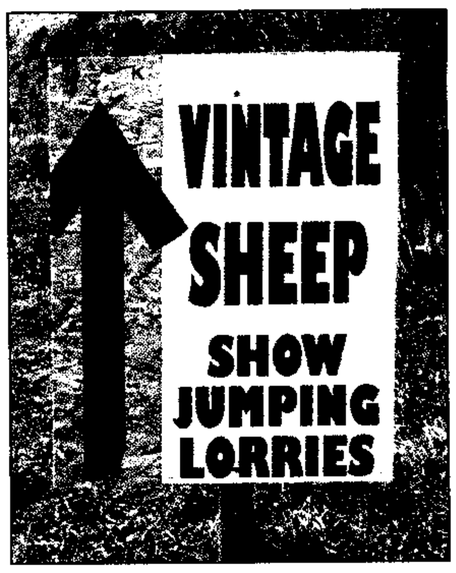
Before the war there was nothing to stop Rudolph Palumbo demolishing half a house or a whole one. Today there is — and surely mutilating an innocent symmetrical pair of houses is reason enough.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

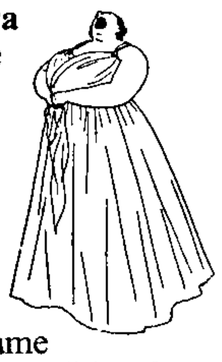
BY BIRCH

I-SPY *Okehampton*



Submitted by Gary Shrimpton. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS



THAT fundamental law of opera management – the bigger they are the harder they fall – has been at work in the case of the crazily extravagant *Carmen-to-end-all-Carmens* that was supposed to play to a nightly audience of 14,000 in Seville this month.

The latest international blockbuster production – from the same Austrian promoter, Michael Ecker, who did *Aida* at the pyramids and *Turandot* in the Forbidden city – was marketed around the world as the opera event of the year. It was launched over a triumphal weekend for which hundreds of music hacks were flown in from every corner of the globe and was scheduled (in brochures glossier than *Vogue*) to feature some of the grandest names in the business: Angela Gheorghiu, Lorin Maazel, the Philharmonia Orchestra from London and the New York Philharmonic. It wasn't hard to believe Ecker's boast that the whole project carried a price tag of €22m.

But what did take some effort of belief was the idea that any of this would come off as planned. The Ultimate *Carmen* was supposed to be staged on what Ecker called "the original sites" in Seville – a claim that could never be quite true because *Carmen* happens to be a fiction, but nonetheless meant that each Act of the production would happen in a different open-air location, with the vast audience (not mention artists, orchestra, administration staff and stage-hands) staggering through the already congested streets of Seville from one "site" to the next.

It promised to be one, enormous, nightly shambles: Armageddon in rehearsal. And the artists clearly thought so too, because one by one – for a variety of reasons – they began to pull out. The New York Phil said it couldn't get the funding together to be in Spain on the appropriate dates. Lorin Maazel pleaded illness. And funnily enough, not a single conductor with international clout could be found to stand in for him.

Result? Ecker has now announced that the Ultimate *Carmen* is cancelled (or, as he puts it, "postponed") and an awful lot of opera-lovers throughout the world are left high and dry with uncancellable flights and booked hotels but no opera. The Philharmonia Orchestra, which had planned to ship all its players to Seville for more than a week, isn't too happy either. But as one player commented: "It looked like being such a bloody nightmare it's a relief to be out of it."

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

JUST FANCY THAT

Pornographic spam has risen by almost 350% since June according to e-mail filter firm Clearswift. In a possible attempt to keep up with demand, the number of junk e-mails offering Viagra has also risen significantly. "It is baffling why there is such a huge uprise," said technical director of Clearswift Alyn Hockey.

BBC website

Letters

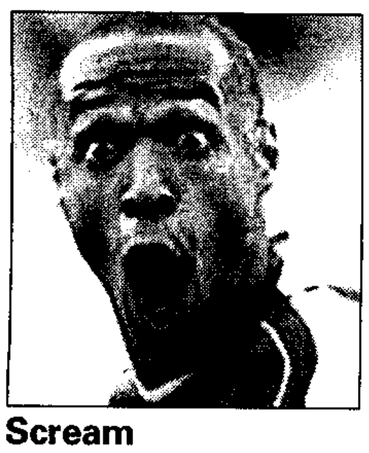
Lookalikes

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the remarkable resemblance between the following:

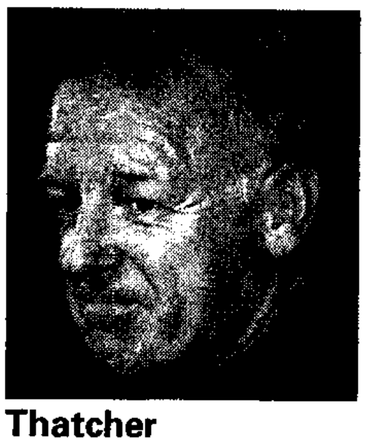
The footballer Thierry Henry and Edvard Munch's The Scream; Les Dennis and the well-known comedian Sir Mark Thatcher; Carol Thatcher and Sir Jimmy Savile; the molecular structure of nandrolone and the Olympic logo; the city of Njaf and the Millennium Falcon from Star Wars; and the gorgeous, pouting Kimberley Fortier and the gorgeous, pouting Monica Lewinsky?

Yours collectively,
SIMEON BERENDS, BEN HARDY,
DAVID KOHL, NEIL SMITH,
NICK JONES.



Scream

Henry



Thatcher

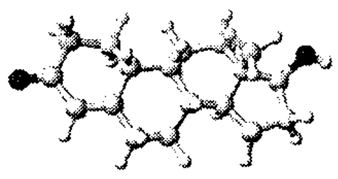
Comedian

Saville

Thatcher

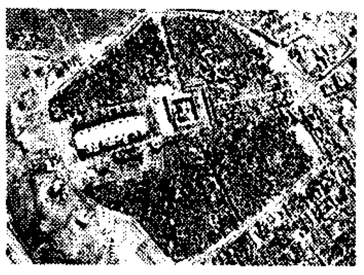
Lewinsky

Fortier

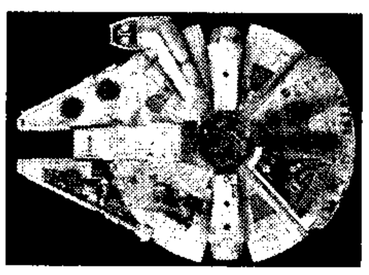


Olympic logo

Nandrolone



Millennium Falcon



Njaf

Shabbey habit

Sir,

With respect to the latest issue of your esteemed fortnightly, which canny media planner is going to be rewarded for matching Abbey National advertising so neatly with editorial? Can Lord Gnome seriously expect readers to believe that the full page ad for Cater Allen private bank (prop: Abbey National plc) is unrelated to the a plug for it in In the City's unfortunate tale of Richard Chang? I think we should be told.

The fact that the character in the ad is clearly on the phone to the Samaritans because he's contemplating the jump makes it merely another example of the shameless opportunism that is blighting modern media. I trust that this isn't the first of such letters/emails.

JIM JARRETT,

Via email.

Nether regions

Sir,

HP has been imbibing too much sauce of late and not paying attention.

The plan for the fire services is not privatisation but regionalisation, along the lines of most other aspects of our country.

Regionalisation is an intrinsic part of the programme of completely altering our government from parliamentary democracy to regionalised bureaucracy as decreed by the EU and willingly signed up to by successive governments, without any reference to the electors.

Yours sadly and disenfranchised,
GRAHAM BOOTH, MEP SW UKIP

Via email.

Smoke and ire

Sir,

Good to see that irony (or perhaps paranoia) is alive and well at Lord Gnome's HQ.

The 14 members of the Local Government Association Executive, drawn from the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent Groups who voted unanimously to reject the terms of the proposed agreement negotiated, without consultation with the LGA, by the former Chair of the Fire Employers, will be fascinated to be described as "ultra Blairites".

It was perfectly legitimate for the LGA to ensure that its views on the one outstanding issue for the FBU were reflected at the full meeting of the employers' side, whose members are there to represent the local authority associations not to overrule them.

What was at issue, and what subsequent discussions have sought to resolve, is the question of what duties firefighters can be expected to perform on bank and public holidays when they receive double pay and a day off in lieu.

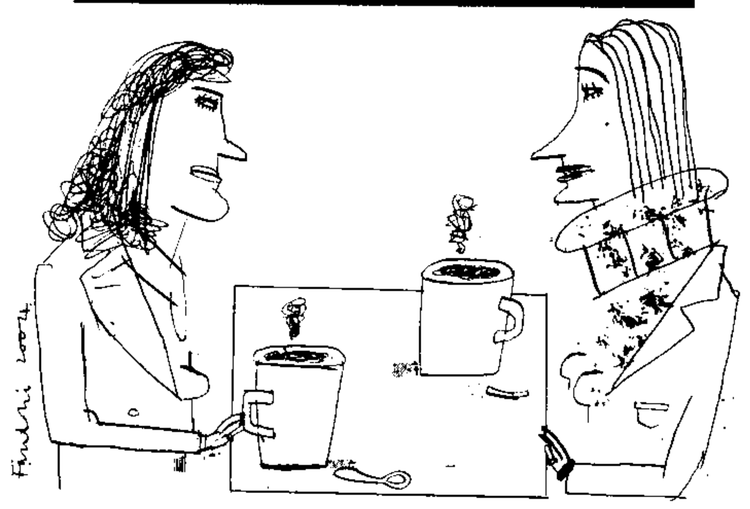
Seeking reasonable working in return for this package is what the public, who pay for it, would expect. The government is not "forcing the employers to renege on the pay deal", nor is it "intent on prolonging the dispute", nor is there any intention on the part of the employers or the government "to force a showdown which ends in the crushing of the union".

It was incidentally unnecessary to single out for mention in the context of the employers' side meeting the head of the Labour Group Office, who had also been subjected to a string of aggressive emails. She was merely doing what she had been asked to do by the elected leadership of the Labour Group.

Yours faithfully,
"SIR" JEREMY BEECHAM,

Leader LGA Labour Group,
Smith Square, SW1.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Over the weekend we went to see the Princess Diana Memorial Fountain. It's impossible to describe how moving it is."

Foot note

Sir,

Philip Roe (Letters, 1113) took Paul Foot to task over the latter's criticism of forensic scientists in the aftermath of R v Hanratty (1962). Mr Roe claims that "a scientist pointed out that there was enough resemblance between the murderer's DNA extracted from semen at the crime scene and that of Hanratty's surviving relatives to suggest that it would be interesting to exhume Hanratty's body".

On the contrary, objections had been made at the time concerning the folly of attempting DNA analysis on material evidence assembled decades before the development of DNA-profiling. Clothing of the rape victim had been stored in close proximity to samples taken from the suspect such that cross-contamination between the two was inevitable.

Since the establishment of DNA evidence as a technique admissible in court, the rules of evidence have required complete segregation of such samples in order to preclude contamination. The value of the DNA testing having already been compromised by failure to maintain segregation of these items over 40 years (hardly "DNA extracted... at the crime scene"), why did the scientists compound the error by requesting exhumation of James Hanratty's body? The result was inevitable and predictable given the flaws already exposed in the analysis. Mr Foot may thus be excused for describing this as "scientists desperately trying to prove they are right" (Mr Roe again). Even if the scientists concerned deny prejudging the issue, they were guilty of abandoning the caution and scientific rigour that their methodology demanded.

Astonishingly, the discrediting of Dr Skuse's forensic scientific evidence with regard to the Birmingham Six has yet to lower the arrogance of his colleagues.

Yours sincerely,
BILL WHITE,

Chesham, Bucks.

A bean counter basher writes...

Sir,

I enjoy your publication and was pleased that the work of the Accountancy Investigation and Discipline Board is being recognised (In the City, 1113). The following information might have assisted your report:

1.The AIDB did not become fully operational until June 2004;

2. Stuart McKee declared a potential conflict of interest at the outset and has taken no part in discussions relating to the Mayflower Investigation; and

3. I think we prefer to be described as the new independent disciplinary body for the accountancy profession rather than the "get tough bean counter basher".

Keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely
CAMERON SCOTT,

Executive Counsel, AIDB.

Mass movement

Sir,

Tee, hee, how amusing, "outsourcing" Catholic Masses from the US and Europe to India as to a call centre (Funny Old World, Eye 1113). But sending surplus Mass intentions along with appropriate donations to the missions is in fact normal Catholic practice, and long has been. It's certainly a lot better than the alternative, of having every western priest saying multiple Masses every day (which is canonically illegal anyway). I'm always very happy to think of some vibrant Indian, African, South American or Caribbean congregation praying for my lately dead relative or friend, just as I pray for them, and it helps pay their priest's wages when both priest and community are often very short of money. Surely you have spiky Anglican friends who have explained the idea?

SARA PARVIS,

Edinburgh.

"Cool! A lack of charm bracelet"

Wray of wit

Sir,

I know that only a philistine corrects a poet, but I can't help pointing out that E.J. Thribb is mistaken in his belief that the lovely Fay Wray appeared only in silent films. King Kong was a talkie, so perhaps Wray's catchphrase was something like: Aieeee!

BRIAN CATHCART,

London N10.

Food for thought

Sir,

I was surprised to see the Eye falling for the old food industry lie (review of Dr Gillian McKeith's book, You Are What You Eat) that the natural, unprocessed food that forms the bulk of McKeith's "healthy eating" plans is more expensive than the junk food it replaces. It isn't, and never has been, though the frequency with which the lie is repeated perhaps accounts for the fact that many people believe it unquestioningly.

As McKeith points out in her TV programme, all her eating plans are cheaper than the junk regimes. There's a reason the processed food industry refers to their products as "value-added". They take cheap natural ingredients for which they pay the farmer a pittance, and do something unnatural to them so they can sell them at a more expensive price.

As for McKeith's not having a medical background, that may be to her advantage. The last time I asked, trainee doctors do just a few hours of nutrition in medical school. So on questions of nutrition, maybe it's best to consult... a nutritionist.

Sincerely,

CLAIRE ROBINSON,

Chagford, Devon.

Pretentious, lui?

Sir,

I was mystified as to the reasons for including Stephen Hawking in Pseuds Corner. If you are mocking him for his use of technical mathematical language on the BBC website, this might make him a target for the Plain English Campaign, but hardly means he is a pseud. Just because you don't understand what is being said does not mean the writer is being pretentious.

Apart from that, keep up the (mostly) good work.

LAURENCE CARSON,

Via email.

Olympicballs

£10 paid for contributions

"He's got so much potential and most of it is still to be realised."
STUART STOREY, BBC
(Keith Roberts)

"And Kelly is not one for hiding her heart on her sleeve."
DANNY WILLIAMS, London Radio
(Hugh O'Mahoney)

"And now, back to the Women's Beach Volleyball, where we have an all-Brazilian quarter-final for you..."
CLARE BALDING, BBC
(John Cowin)

"She has been a child prodigy since she was a youngster."
KARCH KIRALY, NBC
(Stan Hauff)

"Diving will go onwards and upwards from here."
PETE WATERFIELD
(Jean Wallace)

"His recovery from career-ending injuries is almost complete."
DAVID COLEMAN, BBC
(Andrew Norton)

"And they're a bit short tonight, the Chinese."
BARRY DAVIES, BBC2
(Anthony Reid)

"From some areas on the steps, you can get a view of the Acropolis and there's not many sporting arenas around the world where you can say that."
ELENOR OLDROYD, Radio Four
(Colin McNicoll)

LUVVIES

"I love that man like a family member", she says adoringly of her co-star. "During the shoot I missed him so much over the weekends and, when I told him that, he would get overly emotional and cry."

SCARLETT JOHANSSON
(talking about John Travolta)
Sky The Magazine

Submitted by Steven Hughes

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Poet cornered

Sir,

I, the Blasted Heath, appear once more in your column of Boroughs Rotten.

Has it been three years or more since I, old Blasted, featured there?

Where have I been?

Spending my gains ill begotten?

What gains? Where begotten?

So secretive am I,

I know not where it is hid, that treasure trove lid of that so-called 880,000 quid!

I have travelled far, I have travelled wide,

Across this earth, middle, long and short,

Through the lands of hobbits, goblins and fairies (not you Hyslop! Perish the thought)

And to Torridge by the seaside I arrive, to fight for unsung heroes,

Councillors and officials,

And to challenge the Darkness, Princes several, who would that place bedevil,

And to guide their Queen from across the Taw and the land of Lochness,

To a place of democracy and openness.

Was it truly for thirteen years that I, Blasted, travailed in the land I loved so well,

That land of government local?

Or was it thirty-one?

No it was indeed thirty-one but it felt like thirteen.

Your informant, as he has done on so many occasions before,

Grasped the stick at the wrong end with his grimy paw

And as fulsomely, as he did, so many times before.

And what about Monks the publican?

The Council did his prosecution approve, not I,

And justice done by the Courts of this land with evidence overwhelming,

As Private Eye did themselves espy,

Monks in vengeful clamour did cry

That poor Blasted was no more than a common whore

Damning Blasted's reputation and more

Cleared by District Auditor was I

After due inquiry

And so, I, Blasted, retired with reputation unsullied,

And not by the wretched Monks muddied.

Please continue to fight against Boroughs Rotten

But if you assail those appointed, or there by election

Make sure your facts are correct after true detection,

I live in hope this letter will make your next edition.

Kind Regards,

Yours sincerely,

ROGER (Call me Blasted) HEATH,

Acting chief executive, Torridge District Council.

● We have replied to Mr Heath (in verse). More next issue. Ed.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

HOW MANY FINGERS?
THE AMAZING MATHEMATICAL DOG
THE AMAZING MATHEMATICAL DOG
BARK BARK
STUPID DOG! THAT'S WRONG! FOUR FINGERS, NOT TWO
JUST COME A BIT CLOSER..

Letter from **Kazakhstan**
from Our Own Correspondent

THIS autumn, as the icy Siberian wind starts to blow across the steppes, our voters will flock to the polls to elect a new parliament. And what a nail-biter it could be.

The clear frontrunner is the Asar (All Together) party, set up less than a year ago by Dariga Nazarbaeva, daughter of our glorious leader, Nursultan Nazarbaev, and his most likely successor. But she will have to overturn the majority of seats held by the Otan (Motherland) party that is controlled by loyal supporters of her father. Whatever the outcome, it will be a great victory for democracy.

Our diverse republic, which stretches thousands of miles from the Russian border to the snow-capped peaks near China, is a proud throwback to the days of the Central Asian khanates. It is a family-owned enterprise often referred to as Nazarbaev Inc, which controls vast swathes of the oil-driven economy and has a firm grip on the media, political groups and just about everything else.

Dariga, heir apparent and eldest and most responsible of Nursultan's three daughters, has her own political party and runs the main state-owned news agency. But hers has not been the easiest of rides: two years ago, her husband Rakhat Aliev was hastily dismissed as a presidential adviser and sent packing to become our new ambassador in Vienna. Mean-spirited gossips say he was plotting a coup against the old man and was lucky to escape with his life.

Daughter number two, Dinara, is a powerful force in education, while her ambitious husband Timur Kulibaev controls the oil industry, the source of our expanding wealth. The third daughter has had a rather unhappy history: after once being corralled into a marriage with the son of the leader of neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, she has now tied the knot with a local businessman and heads her own construction company.

The Nazarbaev corporation likes to stay out of the limelight and keep its business dealings secret. Alas, this has not always been possible. Shortly after the elections are held, American consultant James Giffen is due to stand trial in the US accused of diverting millions of dollars in oil payments to bank accounts controlled by members of the Nazarbaev family and other local dignitaries. It is going to be a nervous time for Nursultan, especially as Giffen was his adviser on oil affairs for more than 10 years and may have some interesting stories to tell.

The forlorn Giffen, meanwhile, is trying to avoid trial by claiming that he was working in close cooperation with his friends in the CIA and giving them gold-plated information. Giffen could well suffer the same fate as his close friend Bryan Williams, a former executive of the US oil company Mobil, who last year was sentenced to four years in prison for failing to declare a bribe to the US tax authorities.

If it weren't for our billions of barrels of black gold, nobody would care too much about Kazakhstan. As it happens, we have hordes of businessmen populating our trendy bars and looking to make a quick buck. Oil has sparked some unlikely alliances: for example, the former head of British Gas, Cedric "The Pig" Brown teamed up several years ago with the president's brother, Bulat Nazarbaev, to explore one of our smaller oilfields. And a new generation of wealthy young Kazakhs has set up offices in fashionable parts of London to ply what is becoming a very profitable trade in oil.

But let's not be too negative. Our Khan has a political instinct few world leaders can match. He can outsmart any opponent – it is rumoured he plays chess with himself – and with great dexterity has played the Russians, Chinese and Americans off against each other. Despite his financial peccadilloes, he's still a good friend of Uncle Sam and a willing partner in the battle against the Islamic menace further south. So when our people cast their ballots… they will do so in the knowledge that the leader will be around for many years to come.

Warballs

"Out of the horror reaped by the World Trade Centre attacks, a shimmer of light has descended on Welsh golf. September 2001, for all its destructive stigma, was also a time when vital roots were sown for the sport in Wales. In a major coup by the country, it was announced on the 28th day of that month that Wales would host the largest spectacle in golf, the 2010 Ryder Cup, for the first time." — ***Evening Star* (Ipswich).**

"It may sound odd to call a chilly, paranoid thriller like *The Bourne Supremacy* entertainment comfort food. But in the wake of 9/11, this globe-trotting post-cold-war melodrama full of standard cloak-and-dagger intrigue has the reassuring aroma of a home-cooked meal served while riding the world's smoothest roller-coaster." — ***New York Times.***

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Why red is the new blonde." — *Mirror.*

"Red is the new green." — British Red Cross.

"Yellow is the new green." — Press release from Woking borough council (about recycling Yellow Pages).

"There's a shade of purple that's the new pink." — *Sunday Times.*

"Barcodes are the new black." — *You and Yours*, Radio 4.

"Is jazz the new black?" — *Western Mail.*

"Black is the new black." — *Gramophone* magazine.

"It's official: Earl Grey is the new black." — *Guardian.*

"Is David Beckham the new Princess Di?" — University of Warwick press release.

"Is stress the new asbestos?" — *Insurance Times* supplement.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

• "Clear the Air, Not the Room with GasBGon.

Now you no longer have to be embarrassed by the untimely passing of intestinal gas among your friends or family. The GasBGon flatulence filter seat cushion has been designed and tested to absorb the odour and sound of passing wind. Malodorous gas is a naturally occurring event that affects some people more than others, yet clinical studies have shown that the average person produces one to three pints of gas and passes wind fourteen times a day.

GasBGon seat cushions apply cutting-edge carbon filter technology to absord the sound and odour that accompany flatulence. The unique cushioning property combines to form a dual filter to absorb more than 90% of the odour emitted for most end users. This is the result of a carbon filter that has the equivalent surface area of a football field.

GasBGon cushions have washable covers, and a replaceable activated carbon material to absorb odours. This carbon material is specially formulated to allow for heavy absorption – our studies show its properties are effective on average six months for women, and three months for men.

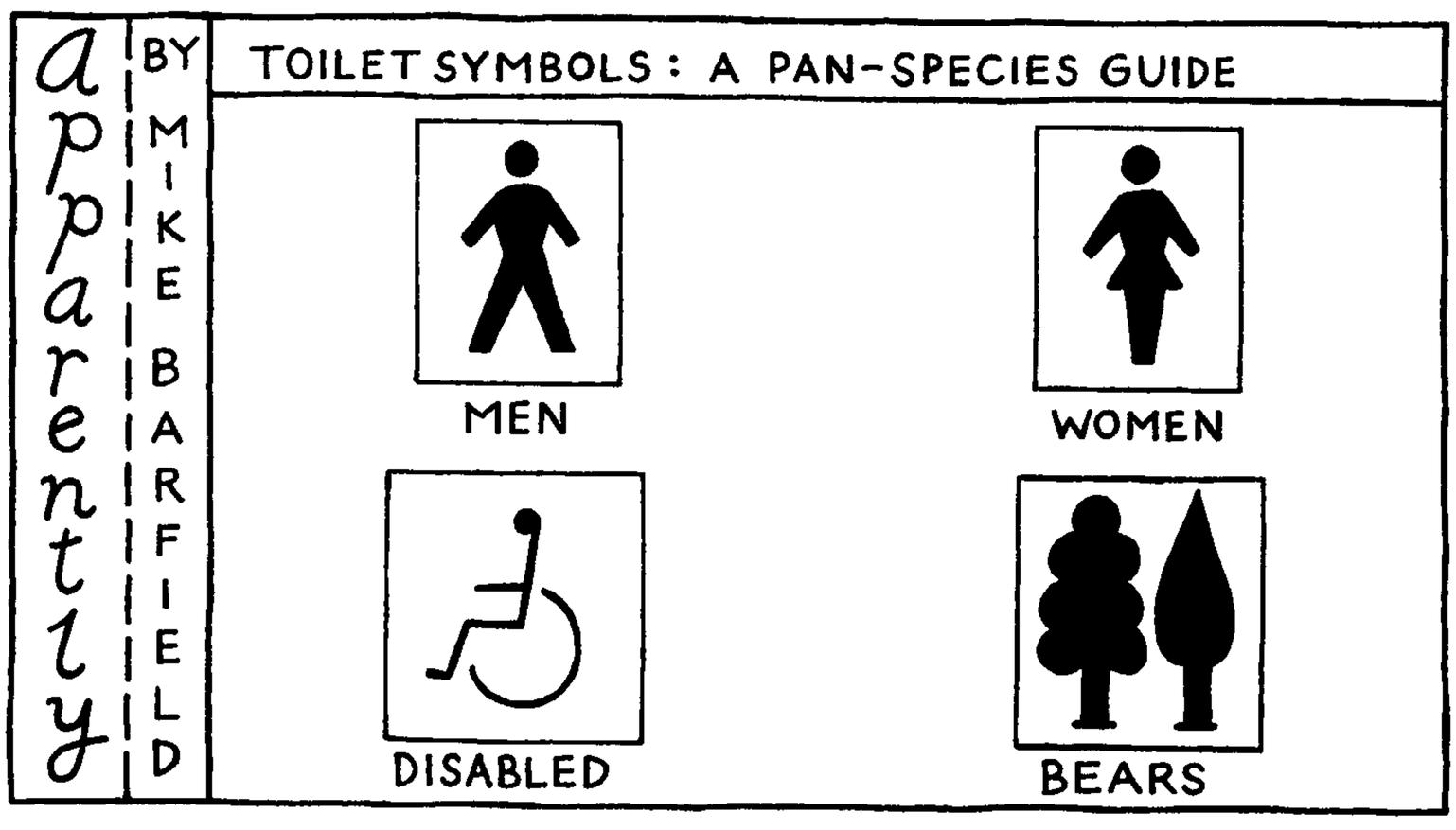
The GasBGon flatulence filter seat cushion is a 100% American product and assembled by a Vocational Center advocating opportunities for the disabled. GasBGon – a serious solution to an embarrassing problem. Prices start at $29.95. Money back if not fully satisfied". *(GasBGon web site. Spotter: Andrew at Whizzbop)*

– • –

• *"You could say we have something of a crisis on our hands," Grant Robertson told fellow organisers of the Ceres Highland Games, "because we have lost our caber. Yesterday afternoon, I took it out of the shed as usual, and placed it in Ceres Burn, to soak up water in preparation for this weekend's competition. But unfortunately, there was heavy rain last night, and it was washed downstream and has disappeared.*

"Usually when this happens, there are several places where the caber would normally stop. But committee members have been searching for it all day without success, and now the waters are rising again. There have been Games held here ever since the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, and they will still go ahead this weekend. But unless it turns up, the tossing the caber event will have to be abandoned, because we only had the one, and cannot get another one made at such short notice."

After an appeal to the public, the caber was retrieved from a municipal tip, where it had been taken by Fife Council workers, who had seen it lying in the burn, and had mistaken it for a piece of rubbish. (Dundee Courier, 24/6/2004. Spotter: Judith Strachan)



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

A Message From Mr Prescott of the Working Men's Club

As is customal at this time of the year, the vicar has asked me to step in and hold the fort, while he and his good lady go off on another of their many holidays!

Don't get me wrong. The vicar's earned every week he spends staying with his rich friends in their fancy palaces in Italy, Barbados and so forth.

Each to his own is what I say, and if you fancy having to sit round while some dodgy eyetie wearing a banana on his head does a cut-price imitation of a Neapolitan gondolier singing "Just One Cornetto", then good luck to you.

It may be the vicar's idea of a fun holiday, but some of us prefer to stay at home getting on with some real work!

No offence, your reverence, but while you've been swanning round the world's beaches free-of-charge (as of course you deserve after all the messes you've got us into in the past few months!), I have been quietly and modestly knuckling down to sorting a few thing out!

And firstly I'd like to thank the vicar's friend Mr Mandelson for not being here anymore, now that he's buggered off (excuse my Belgian!) to Brussels with his little foreign friend Ronaldo (no offence, Peter!), so that the rest of us can get on with our work without Mr Mandelson constantly sticking his nose in where it doesn't belong!

And secondly, it does not help when some prominent members of the PCC who are old enough to know better take it into their heads to start canoodling in the vestry with married ladies!

Not that it's anyone's business but Mr Blunkett's and that of the good lady in question, but what sort of example does it set, I ask, to the young folk in the parish?

I seem to remember the vicar and his pal Mr Campbell getting all high and mighty with Mr Cook when he was caught playing around in the organ loft with his little bit of fluff.

But now with Mr Blunkett it's a very different story – silence is golden and all that!

Perhaps it'll teach the vicar not to get on his high horse about what a good time we all had in the "sixties"!

But the really important thing that I've managed to achieve in the vicar's absence, in case you missed it on the front page of the St Albion Mercury, is that I was able to rescue one of our parishioners who was literally "up the creek without a paddle"!

Remind you of anyone, Tony? (No offence, just a little joke to show that I'm not blowing my own trumpet!)

What happened was amazing! There was this bloke, just about to be swept to his doom in a raging torrent – and as he was pulled out by a couple of bystanders, I just happened to be there to have my photograph taken!

SuperJohn to the rescue by Mr de la Nougerede!

He was very grateful to me for my rescue and for the chance to see his picture in the papers under the headline "Super-Prezza To The Rescue!"

Some of us, you see, like a bit of real adventure when we go on holiday, not just sitting around in Italy eating Valpolicelli and sucking up to blokes with bananas on their heads!

Get the picture?

Cheerio

John "Thunderbirds" Prescott

(Holder of the Swimming Proficiency Certificate, Level 2: Life saving skills!)

Thank you!

We are all very grateful to Mr Drayson for his wonderfully generous gift to parish funds. This has no connection with the fact that we have given him the contract to vaccinate all the kids in the parish. Another coincidence is that the vicar has put Mr Drayson's name forward to become a People's Peer, and that this was approved by return of post! Well done, Mr Drayson, and thanks a million – or rather half a million! T.B.

A Message From Mr Milliband, Deputy Chair of Governors, St Albion Secondary School

Congratulations to all the boys and girls of the school, everyone of whom scored 100 percent in the recent A-level and GCSE exams, and some of them even more! So much for all those doom-merchants who whinge about falling standards! Stop trying to undermine our kids! It's time people gave praise where it's due – i.e. to the governors for changing the exam marking system so that every child gets a chance to shine! D.M.

Announcement

- Good News! The vicar has always been in favour of competitive sports and has decided to reintroduce the egg and spoon race at this year's village fete. It was cancelled last year on the grounds that the losing children might sue for compensation after suffering psychological trauma. How silly!
- Sorry! The egg and spoon race at this year's fete has unfortunately been cancelled due to the fact that the field where we used to run it has been sold and is now an executive housing development called "Prescott's Court"!

Postcard from the Vicar

Dear all,
Who says it's expensive in Italy since they brought in the Euro? We haven't spent a thing!
Love

Tony

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S MARATHON MOUTH!?

■ **SHAME on Wayney! You were the spud-faced nipper who every Mum wanted to tuck up in bed. Now we find that "tucking" isn't what you're after!!?!? You're nothing but a potato-headed sexaholic whose sleazy antics make every mum in the country want to throw up!?!! Go on Roodeney! Buzz off! Your career *is definitely on the 'wayne' geddit?* He does but only if he pays for it?? Geddit?!?! *(You're fired. Ed)***

■ COME ON Mr Pressman!! Leave the spud-faced nipper alone??! He's hardly out of short trousers (well apart from Saturdays) but he's just a teenager with a normal healthy appetite for money and prostitutes!!!??

What red-blooded young man with a few million quid in his pocket wouldn't spend his nights filled with lager giving Chantelle and Michelle a good seeing to down the local knockin' shop!???!

Hats, trousers and condoms off to the future of English football!?! Hip, Hip, Hoorooney!!? *(You're fired. Ed)*

■ **WHO SAYS 'A' levels are getting easier??! I'll tell you what Mister, when I took 'A' levels, a fail really meant something!!?! And I got three of them!!!?! But it never did me any harm!??!**

You know what's more important than G.C.S.E!!??! You guessed it, S.E.X.??!? And I got plenty of that!!?! ***(You really* are *fired. Ed)***

■ THE SCREAM – arentchasick-ofit?!!! Ok so it's been stolen. Who cares??! Who would want Mr Munch's misery guts masterpiece hanging on their bedroom wall??!! Not me!!?! I wouldn't give the Norwegian nightmare a pass at Art 'A' Level!!?!

And anyway, with that on the bedroom wall even spud-faced nipper Wayne Rooney would be hard pressed to keep his mind on S.E.X!!?! *(Right that's it. Clear your desk. Ed)*

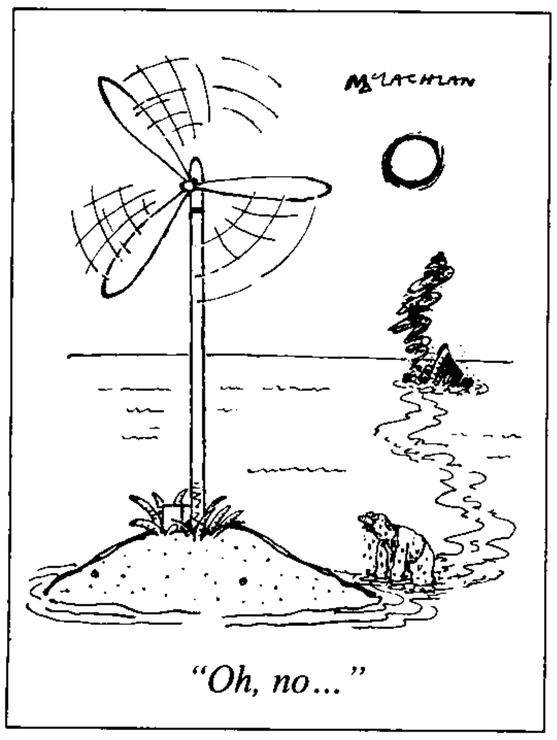
■ **HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Bonk Holiday Beefcakes:**

● **Alfred Brendl** – So you've given your last performance at the Proms??! How about coming round to Auntie Glenda's for an encore??!?

● **Abu Hamza** – How about hooking up with me, big boy!???!

● **Teodoro Obiang Ngnema Mbasago** – Crazy name, crazy dictator of Equatorial Guinea!!!?!?

Byeeee!!!



"Oh, no..."

School news

St Cakes

Pinsent Term begins today. There are 375 oarsmen in the school. R.J.L. Coxless (Cracknells) is Head of Rowlocks. P.D. Cry-Baby (Kleenex) is Chief Blubber. The Departments of Science, Humanities, Languages and History have been replaced by the new Redgrave Rowing Academy under the supervision of Mr D.R. Stroke-Rate. Crabs will be rowed over Sobber's Mile on Nov. 23rd, St. Tissue's Day. There will be a performance of "Four Men in a Boat" in the Ed Coode Hall. Tickets from the Bursar Rear Admiral Sandy Wetbob (Bronze Medal in the Double Skulls at the Berlin Olympics 1936). In and outs will be on Dec. 3rd.

This was demonstrated last week by the swift suspension of Ivan Slavkov, the Bulgarian IOC member alleged in a BBC Panorama programme to have been prepared to accept a bride to vote for London's 2012 bid,

Grauniad

MASTER QUIZ

1 Bill, Craig and Dean have a total of £1.92. Craig has as much as Bill and Dean put together, and Dean has a third as much as Craig. How much does Brian have?

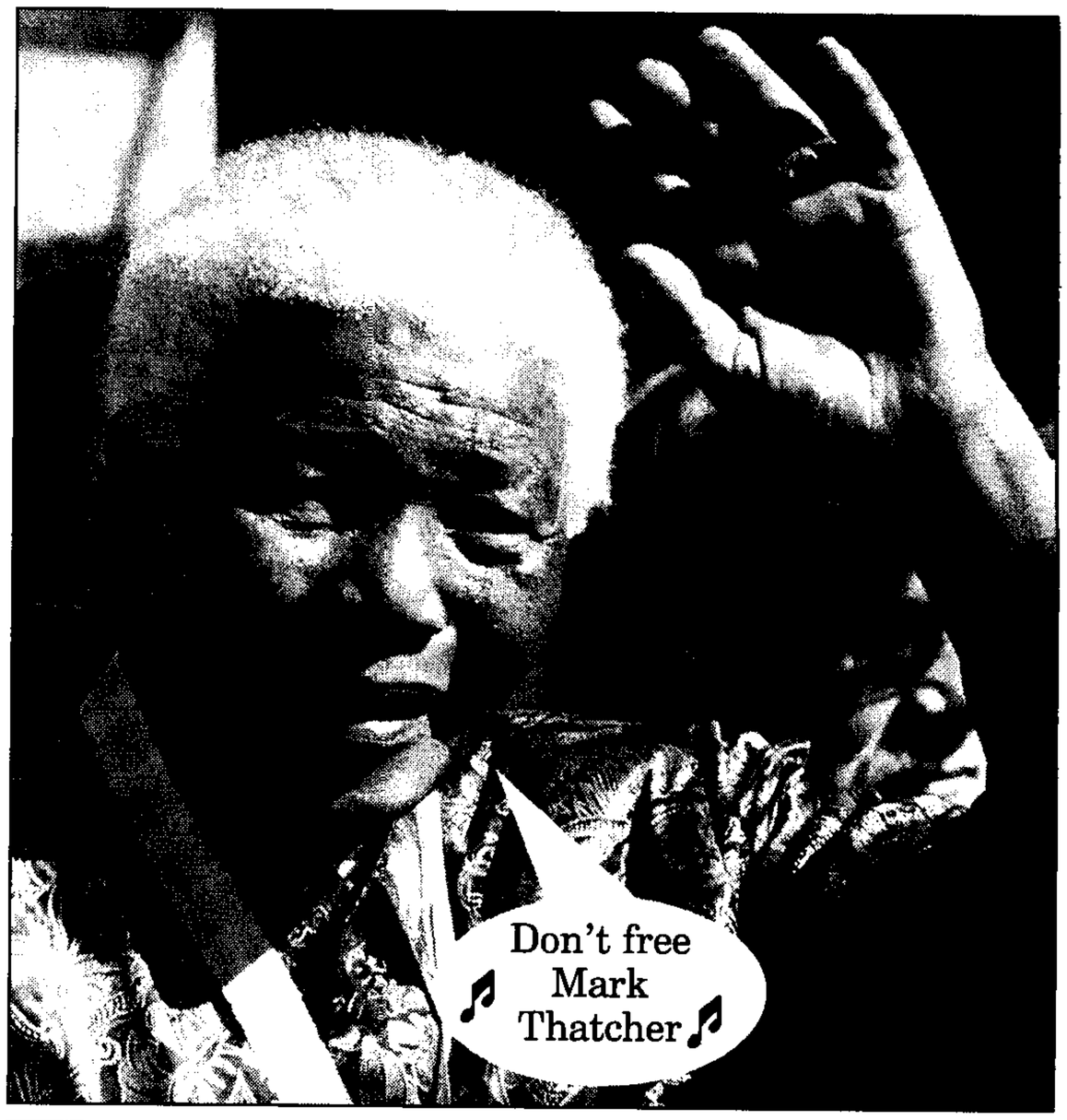
Daily Mail

SALLY JOCKSTRAP

The Voice Of Sport

WHAT'S happening to the world of sport? When is there going to be some sport on television? *(Cont. p. 94)*

MANDELA LEADS WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN



GRAUNIAD

University Courses Still Available

University of the South Circular (formerly The Polytechnic of the A205)

BA (Hons) in Bus Texting Studies

A three-year module on the social role of text messaging from overground public transport facilities with particular emphasis on the upper deck.

The Ikea University of South Wales (formerly KFC, Newport Pagnall)

MA (Hons) Graham Norton Studies

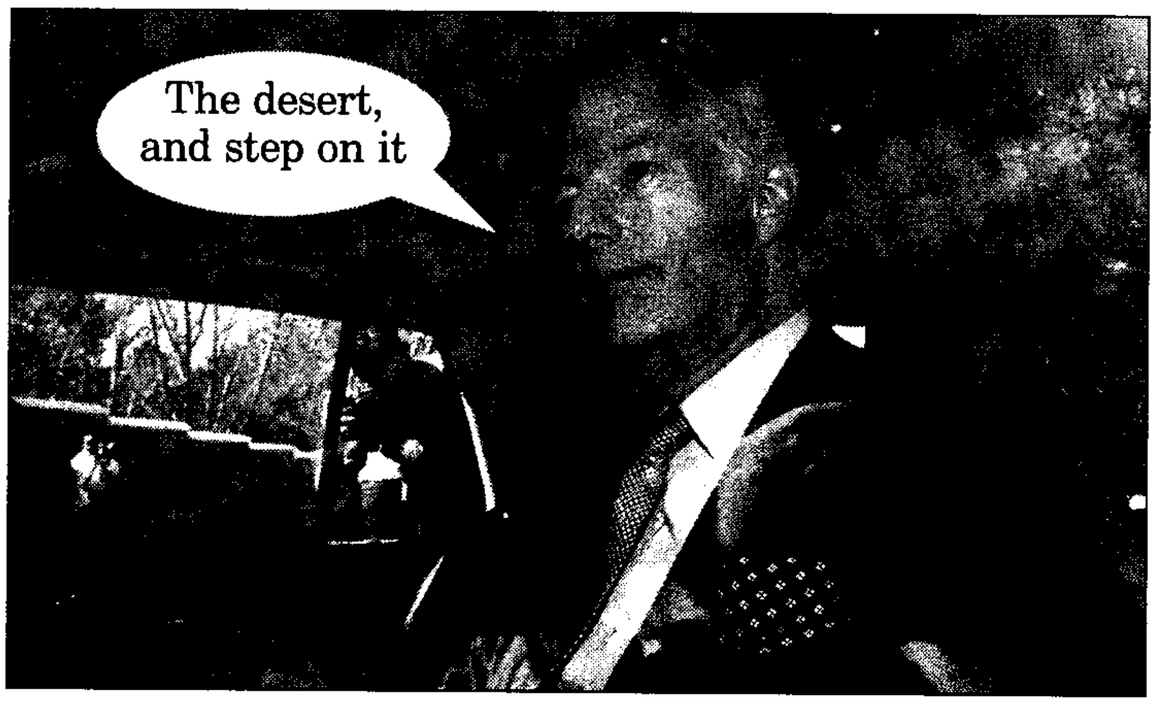
4-year diploma in Norton iconography with reference to influence on the lexicon of mainstream broadcasting. Sandwich course.

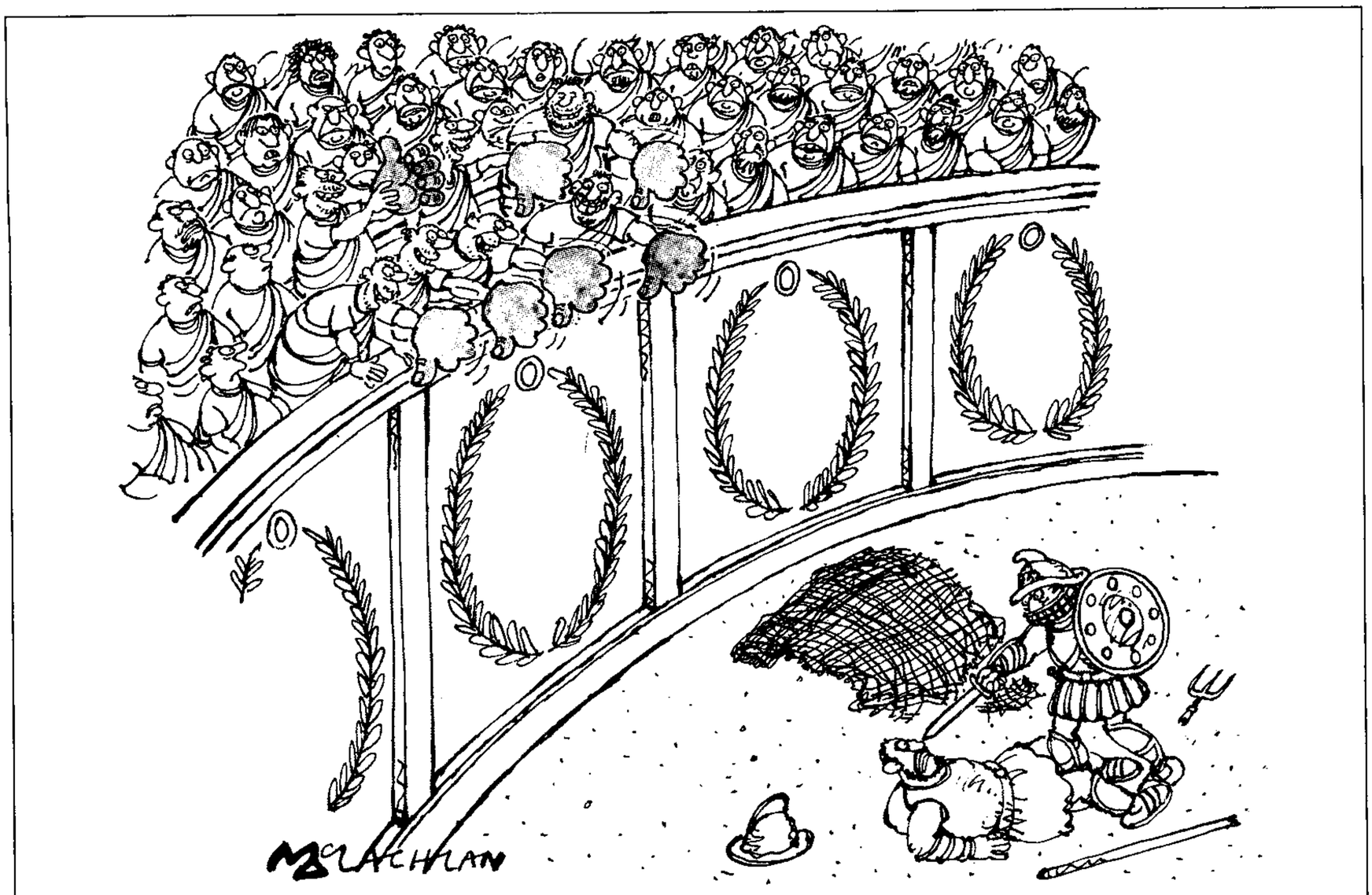
The University of Sellafield (formerly Windscale Polytechnic)

BSc (Hons) How to Work Your iPod.

A seven-year vocational course on the practical operation and functionalisation of *(That's enough courses. Ed.)*

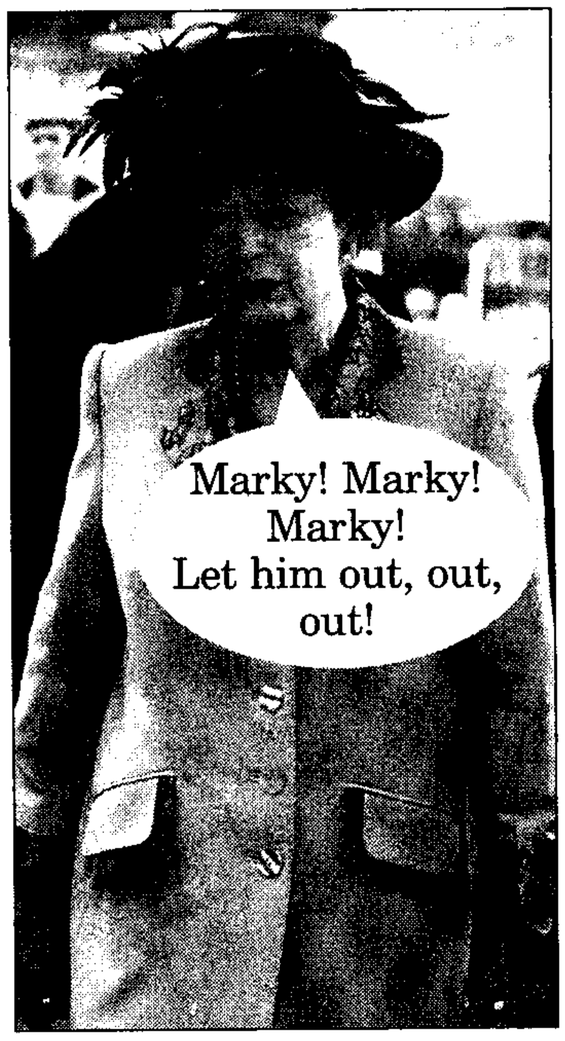
THATCHER'S ESCAPE PLAN





"The crowd behaviour is getting worse and worse every Games"

THATCHER IN ALL-NIGHT VIGIL AT SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY



EXCLUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

House Prices To Do Something Or Other Shock

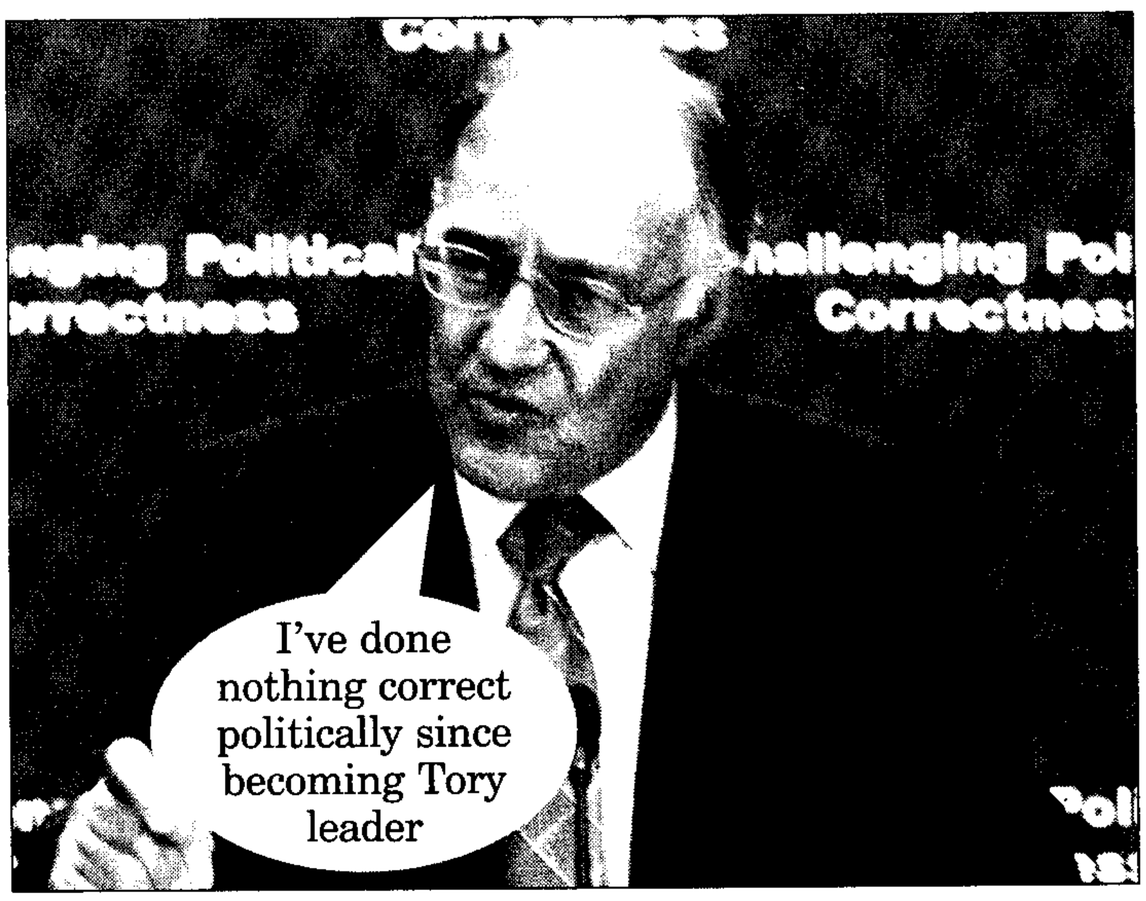
by our House Price staff
Christopher Howse-Pryce

THERE WAS an instant crisis today in the housing market after warnings that house prices may go up, go down, or stay the same in the next three months.

Estate agents and leading mortgage lenders immediately warned that house prices going up, going down or staying the same in the next three months will almost certainly have a negative, a positive or no effect on the housing market.

"This certainly sends out a very clear signal to those wanting to enter the property market", warned one mortgage lender.

HOWARD PLEDGES TO END POLITICAL CORRECTNESS



POETRY CORNER

In memoriam Elmer Bernstein – Hollywood composer

So. Farewell
Then Elmer
Bernstein.

You were the composer
Of many famous
Film scores.

But the one that
Made you
Immortal
Was of course
The Magnificent
Seven.

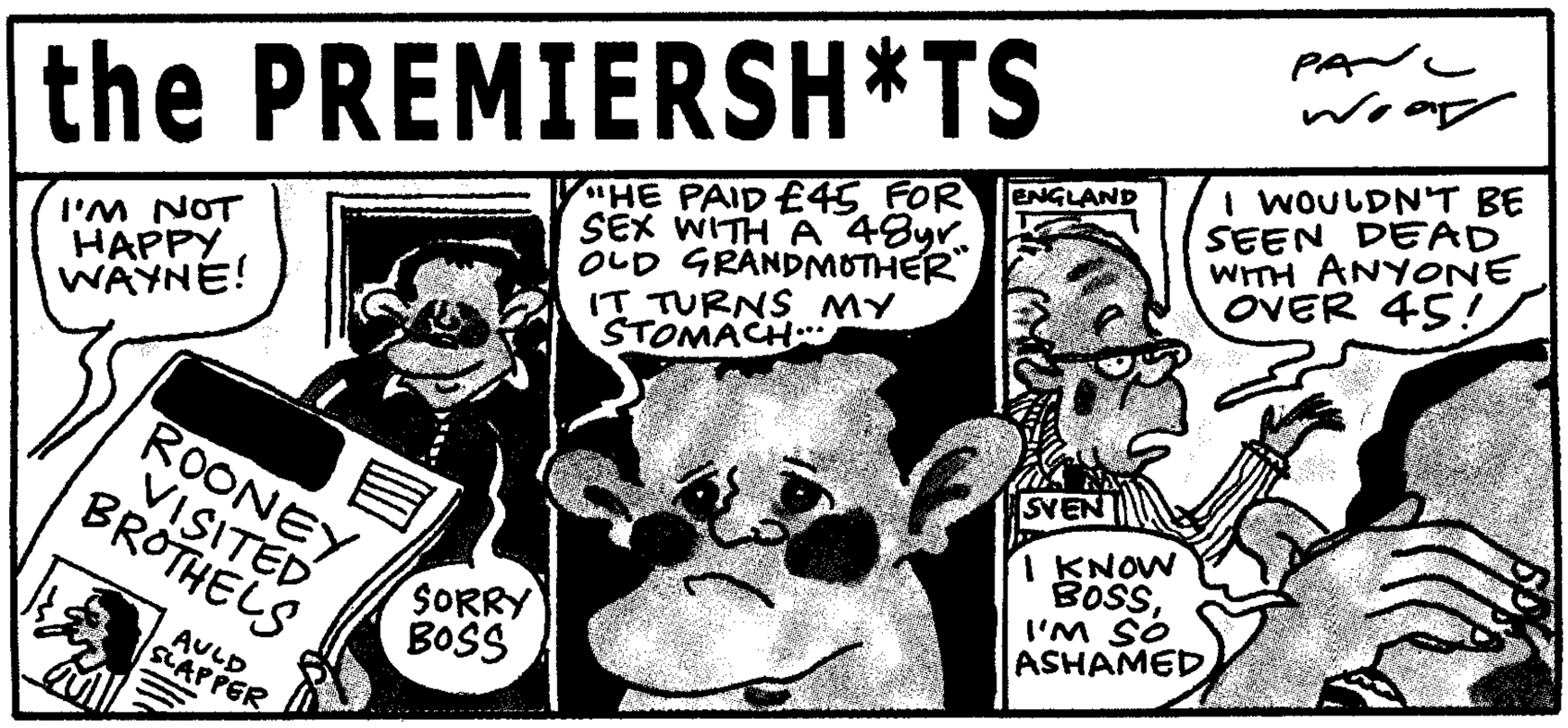
All together now
Dum. Di-da-da-dum
Dum. Di-da-da-dum

Then

Da-da
Di-da-DA-da…

E.J. Thribb
(The Magnificent 17½)

Thribb will be at the Edinburgh Festival (Venue No. 3742, St Ivel's Church Hall, Musselburgh) to read from his new anthology *Dum. Di-da-da-dum*, a collection of his poems commemorating members of the cast of The Magnificent Seven (including James Garner, James Coburn, Steve McQueen, Yul Brynner, Horst Buchholz and the one whose name no one can remember.



That Degree Citation In Full

SALUTAMUS KEVINUM WAKELEIUM CELEBRATUM ACTOREM OPTIMUS COGNATUS QUA SERGEANTUM LEWISUM, AMICUS ET COLLEGIUS FIDELIS INSPECTORI MORSI, DETECTIVUS OXONIENSIS IMMORTALIS, ORIGINALITEN IN LIBRIS COLINI DEXTERI, SED FAMOSISSIMUS PER MULTIBUS ADAPTATIONIBUS IN INDEPENDENTO TELEVISIONE ET REPETATUS AD NAUSEAUM PROVIDARE IMPRESSIONEM TELEVISIONIS QUALITATIS. EPISODUS TYPICALIS INCLUDET MORSUM. LEWISUMQUE SEDENTES IN JAGUARO RUBICO AUDIENTATES OPERATICAS MOZARTUM, PER EXEMPLO FLAUTUS MAGICUS, MORSO EXSTATICO SED LEWISUM IRRITATUM. TUNC UXOR LEWISII TELEPHONET, MORSO, IRRITATO, DIXIT IMPATIENS LEWIS LEWIS. ENTRANT IN DOMO PUBLICO, SITUATUS PROXIME FLUMEN THAMESIS AGREABLIS, UBI LEWISUM SOLVET CRIMEN. SALUTAMUS LEWISUM, DOCTORUS PHILOSOPHAE ET ARTORUM LIBERALIUM, OMNISCIENTUS ES!

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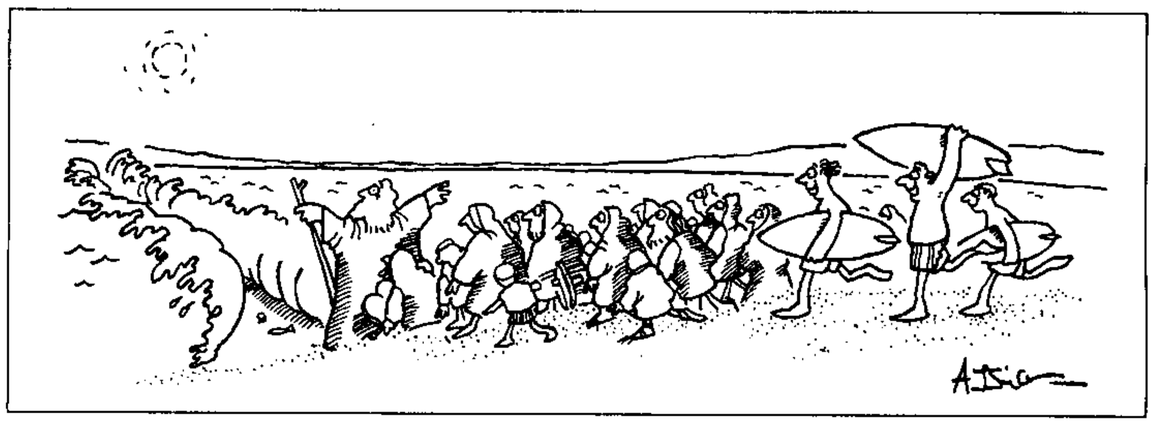
Daily Express Exclusive

Asylum seekers "found in tap water"



THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Why I Say Blair Should Be Strung Up

by Boris Beano

Cripes! Crikey! We've got a great piece in the Spec this week (not about you-know-what, nudge, nudge, wink, wink!). Apparently, according to this Welsh Johnnie, there's a jolly good chance of impeaching Blair for telling a whole string of big fibs about the Iraq war and WMD and all that malarky.

What a brilliant wheeze, say I! I mean, there's no doubt at all that Blair is a complete rotter, and his pants are on fire most of the time. And if they aren't, they jolly well should be!

Not that I'm against the Iraqi war! Don't get me wrong. No, Blair was 101 percent right on that one. I backed him all the way. Saddam was a totally rotten egg, and it was quite right to go in and biff him for six.

So let's not hear any more of this tommy rot about impeaching the prime minister. Crikey, what a stupid idea. *(Reprinted courtesy of the Daily Telegraph.)*

YOU NAME THE BECKHAM CHILD!

Simply choose from this selection:

● BOYS NAMES

Adidas
Vodafone
Gillette
Pepsi
Jaguar
BP Oil Castrol
Tokyo Beauty Clinic
Meiji chocolate covered Almonds
Huggies Nappies

● GIRLS NAMES

Not Rebecca

Phone 0898 747 3259 and help David and Victoria decide on the name of the baby that will help rekindle their brand (surely "marriage" Ed?)

ROY of the REALS

CLEAN-CUT ENGLISH FOOTBALL HERO ROY OF THE ROVERS HAS BEEN SIGNED UP BY SPANISH GIANTS REAL MADRID ALONG WITH EVERYBODY ELSE
HOLA ROY, HOLA MICHAEL, HOLA JOHN, HOLA DAVID, ETC, ETC
THE LANGUAGE IS TURNING OUT TO BE A BIT OF A PROBLEM FOR SOME OF THE PLAYERS
JUGADORES INGLESES DEL FUTBOL! BIENVENIDO AL CLUB MAS GRANDE DEL MUNDO!
LUCKILY ROY COMES TO THE RESCUE
DON'T WORRY LADS, I KNOW ENOUGH OF THE LINGO TO GET BY
COOPER
SENOR BOSSO! DONDE ESTA LOS NIGHTCLUBS Y LOS PROSTITUTAS?
HOORAH!
THREE BEERS FOR ROY!

THAT ALL-PURPOSE OLYMPIC COMMENTARY IN FULL

Shot of panting man or woman in GB vest pounding along track

All-purpose commentator: ...and as they go into the 94th lap, the British lad/girl, Wayne/Waynetta, has had a fantastic start. All that training, all that hard work down at the new Dollis Hill Harriers indoor training track is finally paying off.

Shot of glum-looking coach in glasses.

There he is, the proudest man in this magnificent arena today, Wayne/Waynetta's coach Marty Rusbridger, who was of course himself a finalist in the Commonwealth Games Javelin when they were held in Vancouver in 1975.

And someone else who is going to be over the moon right now is Wayne/Waynetta's mum, Janice, who we can see here, live on satellite from Harlesden.

Shot of glum-looking woman watching TV in bar of Slug and Shot Pot (formerly Boston Arms), Neasden.

As they come up to the bell for the final lap the British lad/girl is looking very comfortable, very relaxed, biding his/her time in eleventh place, just as he/she did in that famous duel in Reykjavik back in 1999/Alabama back in 2001 when unfortunately he/she had to drop out with hamstring/ankle trouble just as he/she seemed likely to overtake the Japanese champion Tamagotchi Pokemono who ended up in 10th place.

And while we're concentrating on Wayne/Waynetta's staggering performance, which should bring him/her a personal season's best by several tenths of a second, news is coming in that an Ethiopian athlete has just won this race with a Ukrainian coming in second, and someone from another country coming in third.

But never mind that, here comes Wayne/Waynetta, giving his/her all, as he/she comes into the last lap. What a magnificent display of sheer guts and real heart this plucky North London ex-postman/woman is giving to the world.

The whole nation is behind Wayne/Waynetta as he/she comes in a gallant last.

Cut to the BBC's legendary Sally Jockstrap.

Jockstrap: Well done, Wayne/Waynetta. That was a fantastic race. Could you talk us through those final moments as you neared the finishing line?

Shot in background of Ethiopian winner punching the air, Ukrainian flags waving and Japanese tourists taking digital flash pictures of everybody.

Wayne/Waynetta: It's a dream come true! I never thought I would be here today talking to you about this fantastic race. It makes all the years of training worth it.

Jockstrap: So your thoughts are already on Beijing. Do you think you'll be able to repeat tonight's performance then?

Wayne/Waynetta: I'm just good to go home and have a good sleep, and then take it one day at a time.

Jockstrap: Well what an inspiration to us all. And now back to Sue, who's got some very exciting news from the Velodrome.

Sue: Thanks Sally, and there's been an amazing development in the Synchronised Darts, where the British pair, Stan Accrington and Larry Lager, could be just about to pull off an astonishing last minute upset by challenging the former Australian Champions, Les Fosters and Barry Castlemaine, for the bronze.

We see two glum-looking men in tracksuits throwing darts in unison at giant board. One of the men falls over clutching his leg.

Sue: Oh dear, that's the last thing they need – it's a repeat of what happened in Nairobi in 2002 *(continues for several hundred hours on all channels).*

GOLDEN TEARS FLOW AS GOLDEN MATTHEW STRIKES GOLD

by Phil Space

AT LAST they came. And there was no stopping them. First it was a slow trickle and then an uncontrollable flood turning into great sobs of relief as journalists across Britain wept openly with relief as at last they had a decent Olympic story to put on the front page.

The stiff upper lip that had held out all through the badminton and the cycling finally quivered and then broke down in tears of unbridled joy.

Said one blubbing editor, Martin Newboy of the Daily Telegraph, "It's what we've trained for and dreamed of for all these years. And when the moment comes you can hardly believe it. An opportunity to put tearful public schoolboys on the front page of *(cont'd. p. 94)*

WHY PLUCKY PAULA DIDN'T WIN MARATHON GOLD FOR BRITAIN

Those Theories in Full

❶ **UNFAIR track conditions organised by corrupt Athenian Olympic officials**

❷ UNFAIR weather conditions organised by corrupt Athenian Olympic weathermen

❸ **UNFAIR pollution cynically orchestrated by Athenian Taxi-drivers over last 80 years**

❹ UNFAIR other contestants deliberately running faster than Brave Paula organised by corrupt drug-taking Athenian Olympic gangsters.

❺ **UNFAIR baseball cap planted on Paula's head by sinister, Athenian/Japanese Triads in League with Al-Qaeda.**

❻ UNFAIR weight of expectation placed on Golden Paula by desperate British tabloid sports hacks in pathetic attempt to sell papers. *(You're fired, Ed.)*

LATE NEWS

■ **STRAW flies into Athens to see scale of Paula Radcliffe tragedy for himself.** *(Reuters)*

DRAMATIC NON-ARREST OF COUP PLOTTER

by Our Mark Thatcher correspondent **Sahara Sands**

THE MAN behind a hare-brained plot to overthrow a corrupt Third World dictator and install a puppet leader who would grant access to the country's oil reserves has not been arrested.

Squads of armed police failed to swoop on the conspirator's luxury home in the heart of London's fashionable Westminster.

Coo What A Thatcher

The plot for which the non-arrested supercriminal was not gaoled was masterminded by a group of American misfits who in recent years have been responsible for a trail of acts of violence across the world.

Its leader is a Texan former draft-dodger and reformed alcoholic known to his mercenary associates as "Mr President".

His British henchman, the subject of the dramatic non-arrest today, has been often described as "the son of Mrs Thatcher".

Others, however, describe him as "a complete thicko and a chancer on the make".

"The President" and his ruthless cronies have long had their eye on the tinpot state of Equatorial Iraq, ruled for years by a psychopathic dictator.

Dogs of Straw

With its rich oil reserves, it offered a tempting target for a take-over, toppling the dictator and installing in his place a convicted criminal, Mr Chalabi, who would then act as the conspirators' puppet in handing out lucrative contracts to the conspirators' finance wizard, known as "Deadeye Dick Cheney".

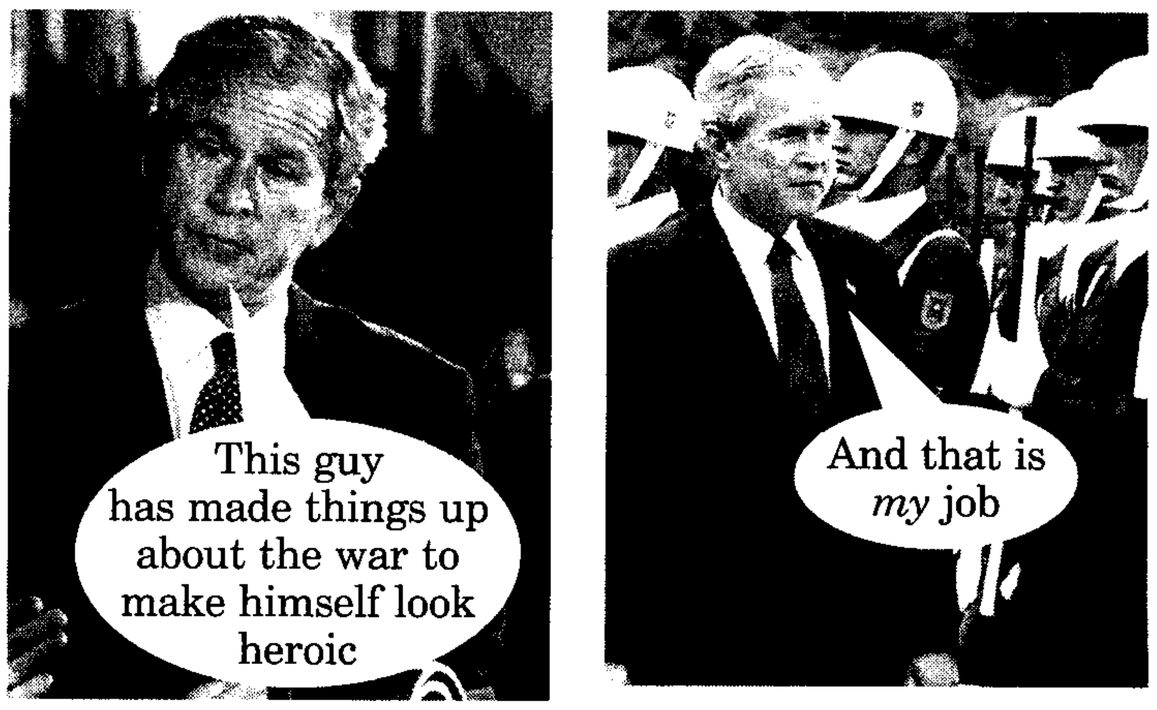
The part played in the conspiracy by the British conspirator known to "The President" as "My Little Tony" is mysterious.

Apparently his role in the attempted coup was simply to "do what he was told" and to provide one helicopter.

When Mr Blair failed to appear at Bow Street earlier today, to face a charge of impeachment brought by a Mr Boris Johnson, no one was at all surprised.

Mark Thatcher is 53.

BUSH ATTACKS KERRY



THAT OFFICIAL US GOVERNMENT ABU GHRAIB JAIL REPORT IN FULL

It wasn't very nice there...

It wasn't Donald Rumsfeld's fault...

Errr, that's it...

NEW INHERITANCE LAW SHOCK

by our Tax staff **Lou Poll**

THE Government's new proposals on inheritance will deliberately penalise high-earning middle class professionals, it was claimed yesterday.

Critics say that the new legislation will mean that, for example, a fifty-year-old scotsman who is looking forward to inheriting a prime London property in, say, Downing Street from his ageing Prime Minister, may never be able to enjoy the benefit. Said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, "I've worked all my life to get into Number Ten and now this stupid inheritance law will make me so unpopular that it'll never happen."

He continued, "Why is this government attacking the very people who it should be rewarding, i.e. prudent, thrifty caledonians like myself?"

When a Mother's Love Turns to Grief

by **Dr Charles Moore,** Consultant neuro-Thatchologist at the Institute of the Today programme

However much we admire Baroness Thatcher for her incomparable achievements, bestriding the history of the late 20th Century as she does like a Colossus, there is always a price to be paid for such outstanding success in life.

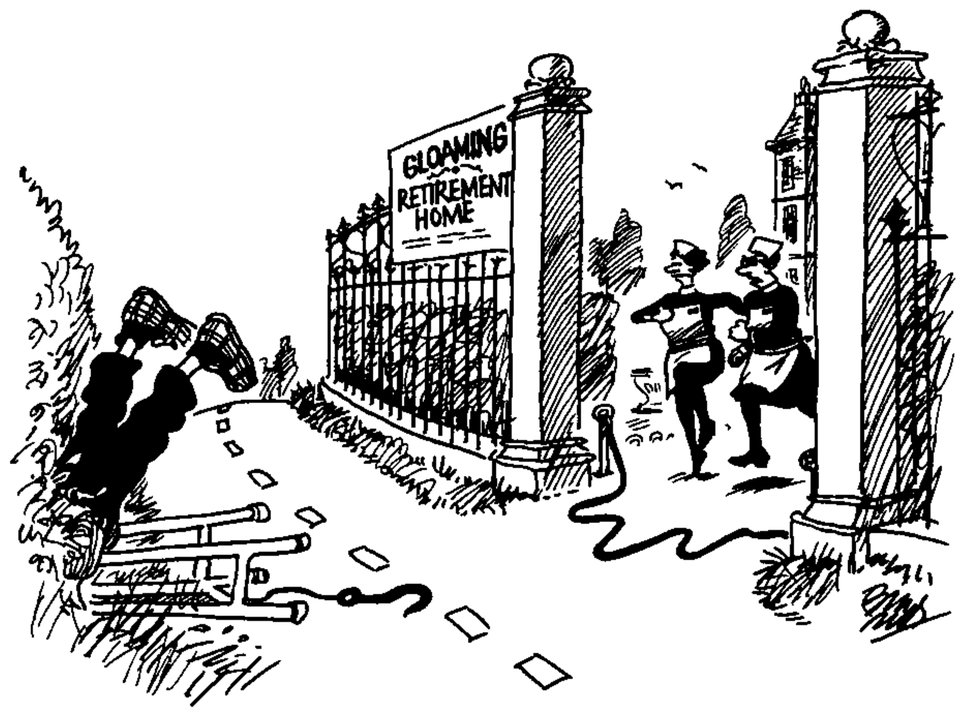
During the years when she was running the country, her children inevitably saw less of her than they would have done if she had stayed at home, cleaning behind the fridge, reading them bedtime stories from the Daily Telegraph and generally "being there for them".

In the case of her son Mark this failure to carry out her full nurturing role has created a massive guilt complex, and she has over-compensated for her earlier lack of maternal engagement by indulging his every wish.

Such a son has often, as Freud pointed out, turned into an international playboy, when, given a more stable upbringing, he might have secured a proper job such as being editor of the Daily Telegraph, working for a respected businessman like Lord Black.

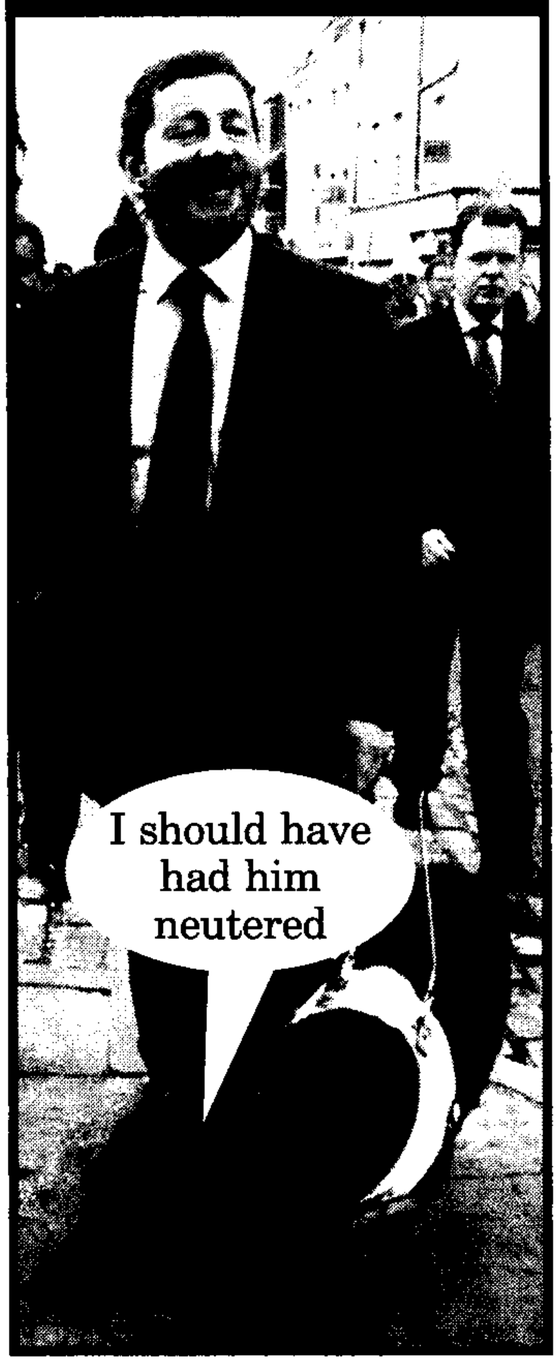
Today, in the twilight of her years, Baroness Thatcher faces one final terrible humiliation – having to read the biography of her written by myself.

"Ah, the romance of the open prairie; the tumbling tumbleweed, the tumbling binliners, the tumbling supermarket carrier bags"



"I don't think Mr Chalcott is ever going to work out that arrester wire!"

BLUNKETT DAD-TO-BE?



LATE BRITISH GAS NEWS

BRITISH Gas said today that the era of cheap UK energy prices was at an end as it announced price rises of 13%.

"We base this prediction on the fact that British Gas has just put their prices up 13%", said a British Gas.... *(cont'd p.94)*

TV Highlights

COLD TURKEY

AMUSING ITV comedy in which lovable John Thomson tries not to take drugs or get blind drunk for an hour.

COKE FEAT

REPEAT of amusing ITV comedy in which lovable John Thomson snorts cocaine and gets legless.

COLD SHOULDER

AMUSING ITV comedy in which lovable John Thomson finds people don't love him quite so much as they did. *(That's enough, Ed.)*

Nursery Times

Friday, 3 September, 2004

PUDDLEDUCK AND GRUNT DECLARE THEIR LOVE

by **Beatrix Lee-Potter**

Yes, it's official! Lovely heiress Jemima Puddleduck is in love – only weeks after she parted from her former husband, Imran Fox.

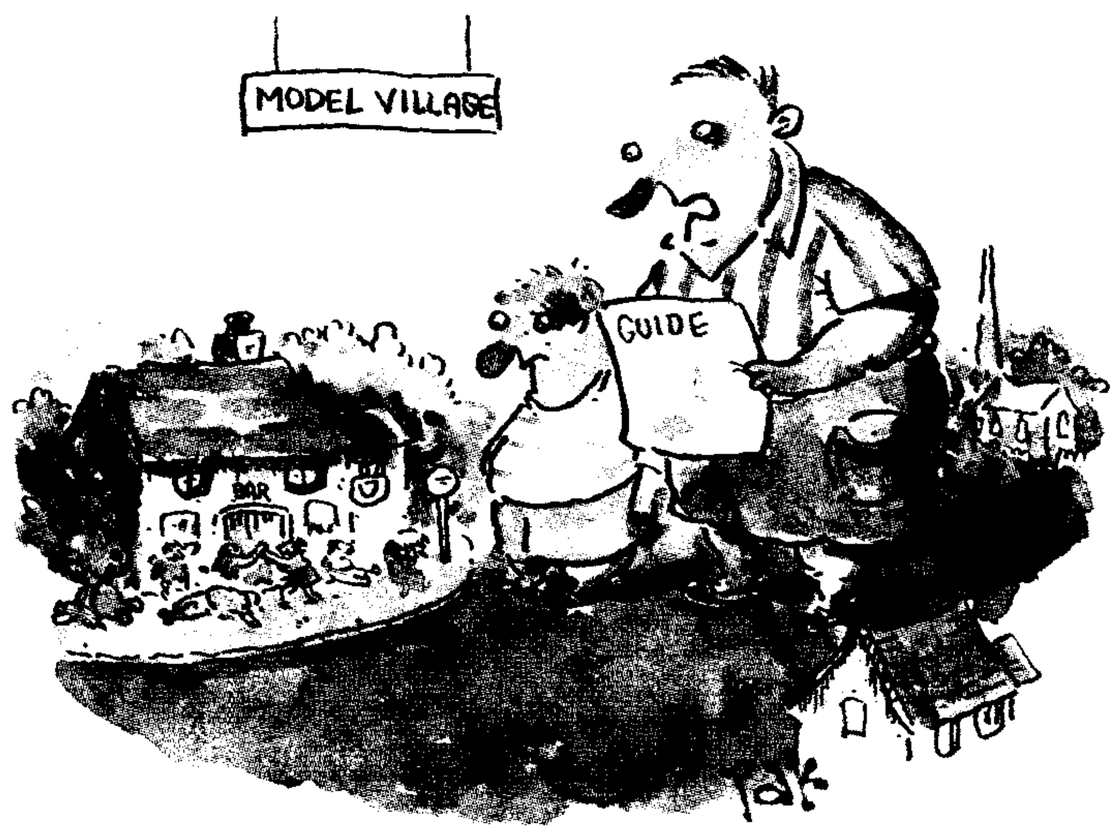
Jemima, daughter of the late financier Sir Jams Puddleduck, has lately been squired around the farmyard by pig-about-town Hugh Grunt, the heart throb of the styes.

Where There's A Swill

But the fast-burgeoning duck-pig romance has aroused the wrath of Jemima's vulpine ex. "She is dishonouring me and her family by associating with this pig," said friends of Mr Imran Fox last night.

"We foxes live by a strict code, and Jemima is trying to disgrace us all."

But Lady Annabel Puddleduck is said to be delighted by the new romance. "He is very sweet and very rich, unlike that dirty fox, with his grotty little house in the woods, full of feathers. I hope Jemima will be very happy."



"Says here it's a binge-drinking-induced pub fight"

Celeb

LIGGER

WHERE DO YOU STAND ON DISCIPLINING CHILDREN, SIR?
PERSONALLY I THINK PARENTS SHOULD HAVE THE FREEDOM TO ACT AS THEY SEE FIT...
SMACKING DEBATE CONTINUES
NEWS
FOR EXAMPLE, WITH MY OWN KIDS, WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG, AND IF THEY WERE ESPECIALLY TIRESOME AND NAUGHTY... WELL, IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES..
IT'S NOT SOMETHING I'M PROUD OF BUT WHEN ALL ELSE FAILED..
SOMETIMES YOU RESORTED TO A LITTLE SMACK?
RIGHT.
I'D RETIRE TO MY STUDY AND TAKE SOME..

Love Is Blind

by DAME SYLVIE KRIN, author of
La Dame Aux Camillas, Born To Be Queen, You're Never Too Old
and thousands of other romantic best-sellers from the Gnome Airport Collection

THE STORY SO FAR: Beautiful American heiress Tiffany Cartier has fallen in love with the tortured but deeply masculine Home Secretary, David Blunkett. But can their love survive in a cruel world?

Now read on...

"HAVE THERE been any messages?" Tiffany Cartier shimmered into her oak-panelled office at the world-famous *Spectator* magazine, and looked expectantly at her young personal assistant Henrietta Starborgling-Smythe.

"Yes", Henrietta smiled back at her perfectly-coiffed American boss, "three hundred – all from Mr Blunkett".

Tiffany sighed sadly, as she looked around the room, which was decked from floor to ceiling with bouquets of red roses and expensive boxes of chocolates from Slater and Walker of Bond Street.

"Who sent all these?" Tiffany asked, knowing only too well in her heart what the answer would be.

"They're from Mr Blunkett too" Henrietta giggled.

Tiffany sat down wearily in her elegant Chipperfield chair, crossing her perfectly-formed legs in that way that over the years had driven so many middle-aged men wild.

"How long can this contine?" she mused, as her gaze wandered over the draft of a new subscription offer, which promised the chance to win a free lunch at the Garrick Club with the magazine's legendary editor Boris Johnson.

But Tiffany somehow could not focus on the mundane details of the business world.

Her mind and every thought returned to the man who for three years had made her life the most glorious romantic adventure she had ever known.

There had been their first encounter at that star-studded *Spectator* party when their eyes met across a room crowded with all the most famous faces in literary and political London – Oliver Letwin, Sir Peregrine Worsthorne and Greek shipping magnate Taki Takealotofcokeupthenose.

Then there were their idyllic, oh-too-short weekends at the hunting lodge on the Chatterley estate, so kindly lent them by David's friend, the Duke of Derbyshire.

How they had laughed when the kindly old duke had dropped in one day with a brace of pheasants, quipping "One good pair deserves another" as he gazed appreciatively at her exquisite embonpoint.

Later the 89-year-old had paid her the finest compliment the English aristocracy could offer when he confided to David, "if you ever get tired of her, old boy, I wouldn't say no to a shot at her myself!"

How she loved the English with their old-world courtesy and well-bred charm – so different from the callow and brash New Dworkin millionaires who had once queued for her favours in the days when she was fresh out of Vasseline College.

PERHAPS THE most wonderful memory of all, however, was that unforgettable holiday, when David had whisked her away for a few days to the romantic Greek island of Intakos, the birthplace of Venus according to the local tourist office.

How she had blushed when they signed the hotel register "Mr and Mrs Smith", and the cheeky receptionist had tapped her nose and said "You no worry. You have nice time, Mr Blunkett!"

And later, as they strolled along the beach in the moonlight to the distant strains of a local fisherman singing a love song as he strummed his 8-string *balaklava* (or was it a *bazooka*?), David had whispered in her ear that it was time for a crackdown on benefit fraud.

They were all alone under the murmuring olive trees, except for David's Home Office minder, Sergeant Heffer, and David's faithful guide dog Hazel, who kept trying to ruin the romantic mood by growling jealously whenever David put his arms around Tiffany's alabaster shoulders.

She closed her eyes, and could smell again the fragrant blossom of the rumpipumpi trees and could hear the chorus of cicadas and the gentle lapping of the...

"CRIPES! Sorry old bean!" It was the tousle-haired editor, Boris, bursting in unannounced to disturb his publisher's reverie.

"I should have knocked really! Never know what might have been happening in here! Ha, ha!"

His lascivious chuckle and unwarranted innuendos seemed to make a mockery of her high-flown romance.

"It's not like that between David and me", she protested bitterly, feeling the tears welling up in her eyes.

"You wouldn't understand the meaning of real love".

The member for Henley looked sheepish.

"Alright, Tiffie old thing, no need to throw a wobblie. I only looked in to check on what was happening with those bulk copies we're dishing out free on Equatorial Guinea Airlines".

At that moment a leather-clad motorcycle courier was ushered in by Henrietta, clutching a giant pink teddy bear from the Giles Brandreth House of Bears.

A hand-written card proclaimed for all to see the message "I can't *bear* it without you".

The editor's heartless guffaw rang right down the corridor to where the Associate Editor Ron Liddle was enjoying a quick midday "siesta" with one of the girls in the marketing department.

But how would it all end? Tiffany wondered helplessly as the rain lashed the windows of the ancient building and the grey clouds rolled across the darkening sky.

(To be continued)

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Literary Review

The circus hits town

Soham: A Story of Our Times
Nicci Gerrard
(Short Books, £9.99)

WHAT was the "lesson" of Soham? "Why," asks Nicci Gerrard, "did we care so very much?" When she talks about "Soham" she means, of course, the murder of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in August 2002, not the "very English town" in Cambridgeshire where it happened. By "we" she means the nation, if not the world. This shorthand vagueness is typical of her approach.

The story of the two missing ten year olds, who were found dead in a ditch, and whose convicted murderer, Ian Huntley, almost escaped justice thanks to the assistance of his partner Maxine Carr, is an appalling one. It is also, apparently, a sufficiently notorious one for Gerrard, a journalist who covered the case for the *Observer*, not to feel the need to present her material in a logical and coherent order.

This is not a book for someone who doesn't already know the story, or who needs to be reminded of specific details. It is more in the nature of an essay, without a clear thesis or any very definite conclusions, padded out with whole chapters of recycled reportage. It repeats itself and contradicts itself and was evidently somewhat hurriedly produced (there is even a glaring typo on the cover) to reach the shops before "we" all forget.

Gerrard notes that "all around us" children go missing, or are hurt and killed, that there are wars, plagues, famines and so on. She compares the public's response to this case with its lamentable indifference to other horrible murders, particularly those involving women and children. She compares the accused, Huntley and Carr, with other notorious defendants such as Fred and Rosemary West, Harold Shipman, the "Moors Murderers" Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, and the child-killers of James Bulger. The public was not indifferent to those cases, of course: indeed its response was similarly hysterical.

Gerrard then offers various explanations for this phenomenon of collective hysteria (which she seems to think a purely recent development), by trotting out some stuff about the decline of religion, the growth of celebrity culture and "recreational grief". She concludes by saying: "The real meaning of Soham lies in the way we responded to it" – ie with collective hysteria; but since her original question was why we responded to it in that particular way, this seems rather circular. The true answer Gerrard supplies without realising that she has done so. The story was, she notes early on, "led by journalists". There was a "media circus", in which reporters "swarmed" around Soham. No doubt the fact that it was all happening in August, a dry month for news, didn't help. Or rather did. "The public needed to be kept up to date," she says blithely. Yeah right.

The fact is, it was a damn good story, and it sold newspapers and turned on TVs. It had, as Gerrard notes, "all the required ingredients." It was "like a classic whodunnit", a "dark and nasty thriller", and a "modern fairytale" all rolled into one. There was that "iconic" picture of the girls, in their little red riding hoods, or footy shirts: "babes in the wood", says Gerrard, destroyed by the big bad "wolf" Huntley.

There were lots of "poignant" details. There was an "unfolding narrative": first the girls were missing, then dead, then came the sensational arrests and trial. The girls were cute and "innocent" and the man and his moll were "monsters" and all the other nasty things going on in the world that silly season were somehow not as easy to cover. And so the media circus came to town. Gerrard fails to acknowledge that she was part of this media circus, at least by the time it rolled up at the Old Bailey, and guilty, too, of the skewed news values that gave the case such prominence. She forgets that news coverage is not necessarily the same thing as public interest. Nor, for that matter, is public interest, or vulgar curiosity, or "gleeful horror" as she puts it, the same as caring. Rather the reverse. Was it "care" that brought bus loads of "grief tourists" to the town?

Gerrard is forced to argue that it was, but in a special modern post-Oprah, post-Diana sort of way. Hence her irritating "we", used not in the sense of "we are not amused" but rather in the sense of "we are all guilty". And even if we weren't all guilty, then we were all "in our own way" somehow "victims of the crime".

While she casts a dubious eye on what she calls the "consoling therapeutic language of hurt and of healing", she seems as much in thrall to its glib reductions as anyone else. Having begun by asking why we cared so very much, Gerrard concludes by saying, in essence, that we didn't really care after all. We were "phoney mourners". The fact is, we were force-fed like Gascony geese with the tale, so of course it made us all weep.

Louis de Bernières'
Birds without Wings

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ NO SURPRISES, then, in this year's Man Booker prize longlist, buzzed out with maximal razzmatazz to the nation's media last Thursday afternoon.

The usual aggrieved punditry over notable absentees notwithstanding, in general Chris Smith MP and his four sidekicks seemed content to follow the lead of the books pages in lining up behind Allan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*, Colm Toibin's *The Master* and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, all raved over by the critics earlier in the year. Several points may be of interest to the disinterested observer:

First, the prize is reaching wholly unmanageable proportions: 115 books were submitted, to which the judges added a further 17 of their own choosing. Did anybody really have the time to read them all? Even the most assiduous panellist who began his or her task in May and never took a day off would still be forced to read ten books a week. It would be much better if the judges were simply given a free hand without the cumbrous machinery of the submission process, while being kept aware of small press material that would otherwise elude their grasp: one of the few points in the current set-up's favour, after all, is the occasional wave from the margins such as Clare Morrall's *Astonishing Splashes of Colour* (Tindal Street Press) which made last year's shortlist.

Second, this year's book biz winners are Faber, Picador and Scribner (three long-listed novels each) with decent performances from the Harvill Press and 4th Estate (two each). Losers are Random House's usually irresistible Jonathan Cape and Secker & Warburg imprints, and Viking Penguin who between them managed no items at all. Of the 22 long-listed titles, only one, Lewis Desoto's *A Blade of Grass* (Maia Press), comes from beyond the London circuit. Last year's innovation of letting in a few people nobody had heard of just to let the world know they were there has been almost completely discarded.

As for the likely winner, expect Mitchell and Hollinghurst to be in with a shout, although a great deal of hype surrounds Susannah Clarke's early 19th century witchcraft epic *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (Bloomsbury). Meanwhile, Justin Cartwright (*The Promise of Happiness*), Maureen Duffy (*Alchemy*) and David Park (*Swallowing The Sun*) can consider themselves grievously wronged.

■ WHEN Sir Sean Connery's autobiography is published, it probably won't include the story of how he shafted a friend.

As an antidote to the numerous cut-and-paste jobs that have been produced about him, for 10 years Scottish novelist Meg Henderson, who initially knew the Nassau-based Scottish Nationalist through charity work, has been trying to persuade Connery to go on record by collaborating with another writer in producing his own memoirs.

Despite famous protestations that he would never write his memoirs, he came round to the idea eventually. But when the first writer dropped out, he insisted to Henderson's agent that he would only do it with her as his collaborator. Together they would do a proper, thorough job, no matter how long it took. As a result, Henderson put future work on hold and thought of the trust fund she would set up for her handi-

capped child with the windfall.

Then it all began to unravel. Connery enlisted US literary agent Mort Janklow and Henderson's calls stopped being answered. But negotiations were still ongoing between a markedly unfriendly Janklow and Jonathan Lloyd of Curtis Brown, who thought he'd struck a percentage deal for his client until, finally, Janklow got in touch with Lloyd to scupper all negotiations. There was to be no percentage deal: Henderson was offered a derisory flat fee, cut up into small parcels and with so many conditions it was no longer financially viable — a deal that appeared to have been put together to be refused, which was always Janklow's intention, having appealed to Connery's well-documented tight-fistedness.

However, if it hadn't been for Henderson's years of disinterested persuasion, Janklow would not have had a book to sell — which he recently did for $7m to HarperCollins, Henderson's own publisher. The deal was made with Caroline Michel in London but was funnelled through Harpic's New York offices to help the patriotic ex-Bond avoid any unnecessary UK taxation.

It now appears the book will be ghostwritten by Hunter Davies. After his success with Gazza, it is very unlikely he has settled for a flat fee; but at least Janklow has the control over the project he wanted. Connery has been claiming that the whole sordid business has been giving him sleepless nights and that he left it all to his agent; but surely Connery must have been aware of his agent trying to freeze one of his (now ex-) friends out of the riches he had promised her?

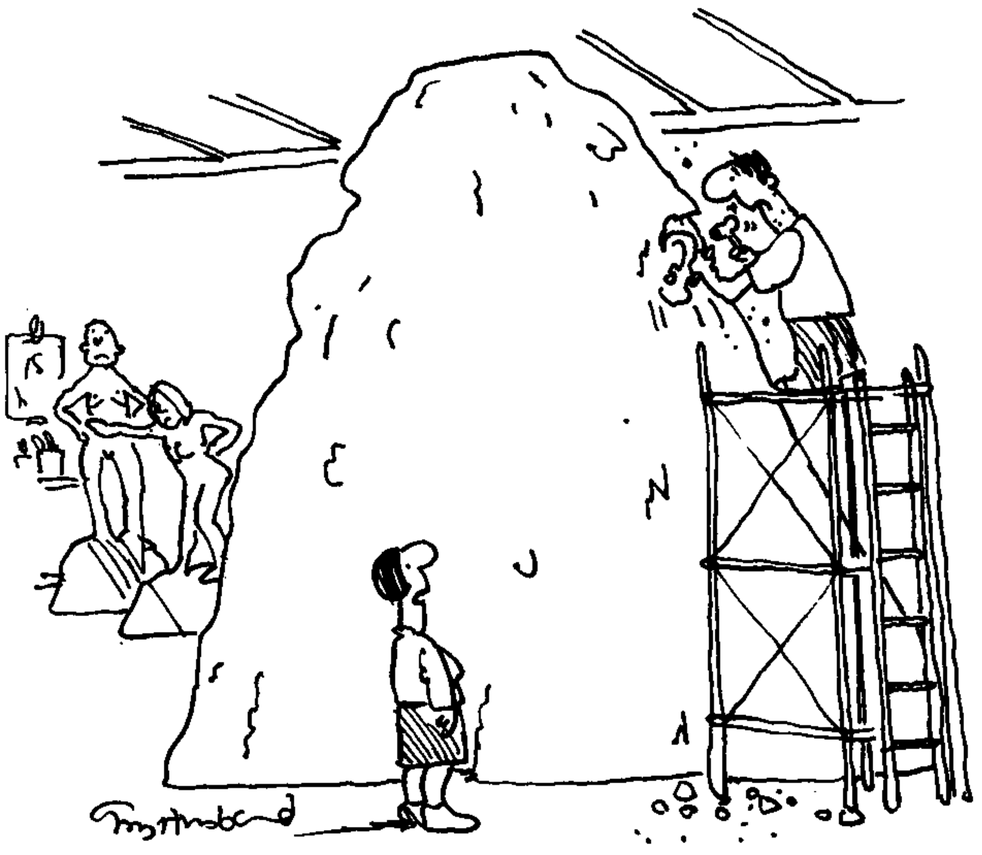
■ WHAT on earth possessed the *Daily Telegraph*, normally quite sane on science matters, to run a whole page plugging the bonkers views (and book) of Sir Ian Rankin?

He believes that gravity doesn't exist, that the sun is not at the centre of the solar system and that in 30 years the earth will be destroyed by a "pole flip". It is all harmless nonsense of course; but one wonders where it is leading: with the arrival on the Barclays' shores of ex-*Mail* honcho Murdoch MacLennan, will the *Telegraph* now compete with his old manor for serialisation of the next *Bible Code* tome?

■ FROM time to time, usually around Christmas, novelty books appear with supposedly oxymoronic titles such as "The wit and wisdom of George W Bush". The joke, when the reader opens a copy, is a collection of entirely blank pages.

Occasionally a book appears with a similar title but no hint of irony. Yes, we are meant to take *The Character of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of Wesley Carr* by Martyn Percy, Stephen Lowe and others (Ashgate, £42.50) absolutely seriously. Never mind that the turbulent priest of the title, the Sacking Dean of Westminster (*Eyes passim*), is not widely regarded within the Church of England as hugely wise. For all Carr's celebrated theories on "human dynamics" and "leadership", one recurring theme of the last 30 years is that of ruined careers and traumatised staff and colleagues.

Some of the essays (principally those that make scant reference to Carr) are scholarly and insightful – but there are some jaw-droppingly inept observations: "I see in [Carr's] attempt to understand our media context an engagement with that most often neglected, but vital element of the Christian spiritual tradition... the virtue of humility. This is shown in his refusal to begin from a stance of judgement." Where was the author of this particular gem during the organist disputes at both Bristol and Westminster?



"Will you be long?"

LOG-ROLLING LATEST

■ A GLOWING review from David Robson in the *Sunday Telegraph* for John Preston's novel "Kings of the Roundhouse". John Preston, by coincidence, is the TV critic and former arts editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*.

'Bookworm'

LIBRARY NEWS

■ MANAGERS at Motherwell College have at long last seen the error of their idiotic 2001 decision to do away with the college library (*Eyes passim*).

However, rather than take the simple approach of restocking, restaffing and reopening, the college has devised a partnership deal with the libraries service of North Lanarkshire council.

The college is to provide books and new staff for an on-site "learning resource centre", while the public libraries have been persuaded to provide their cataloguing and expertise in return for little more than access to the college's book stocks.

Already over-stretched local librarians are less than keen on the plan which has been dropped on them with just a few weeks to get everything arranged before the start of term. Not only that, but they are loathe to get caught up in whatever brilliant plans for wasting money the college comes up with next.

Pseuds Corner

The guitar licks that I milk out of my instrument are as spontaneous as a good shit. I am constantly reminded of my deep spiritual connection with Mother Nature so when I pick up my guitar it's like Lightnin' Hopkins and Muddy Waters propelled through the accessibility of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, and the inventiveness of Jimi Hendrix.

TED NUGENT
The Times

The Atkins diet is a latter-day theatre of agency: its ketogenic luxury is a marked departure from the ancient dietetic tradition's counsel of self-discipline, while the hybrid self within which it works belongs squarely within that tradition, and, indeed, within perduring traditions of practical and reflective moral reasoning.

STEVEN SHAPIN
London Review of Books

On live television the nation watched this difficult, painful, awesome quest for self-identity flower and be fulfilled. When it comes to 'USPs' – unique selling points – Nadia's transsexuality and TV stardom make her one of the most extraordinary human beings alive.

DAVE SMITH and ANUSHKA ASTHANA on Big Brother
Observer

...the real test of a civilisation lies not in its politics but in its wine, which captures the soil, the climate, the religion and the social order, all glistening at the rim of the glass. The awfulness of modern Arabia is reflected in its inability to produce a single drop of the stuff. The beauty of Provence and the rootedness of its people can be glimpsed in its wines. And if anything warns against the Franco-German alliance, it is the absurdity of growing Riesling in France or Chardonnay in the Rhineland.

ROGER SCRUTON
New Statesman

When I was a teenager, my ambition was to work hard, succeed at my profession and then give it all up and sit under a banyan tree, meditating upon the meaning of life.

MARY ANN SIEGHART
The Times

If architecture is, as is sometimes said, music set in concrete, then football and basketball may be said to be creativity embodied in team sports. The two games are both played partly in the air. Basketball players spring off the floor to launch shots at the basket and soar to capture missed shots as they bounce off the rim, even as football players leap up to intercept a kicked ball with their heads to control it, tap it to a team-mate, or redirect it into their opponents' goal. Football and basketball are therefore the team sports that most vividly evoke a common human fantasy: to leave the ground and fly through the air. This is why, perhaps, football and basketball are the team sports with the widest global appeal. It is no surprise that each of the two has established a beachhead in the last great expanse of unoccupied sports territory, the People's Republic of China.

MICHAEL MANDELBAUM
Observer

Contributors: Lorna Stroup Nilsson, Simon Nicholson, Nigel Longhurst, David Pocock, George McNally, James Leith,

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

SUPERBUGS

EASTERN PROMISE

COULD there be a relatively simple, cheap and effective solution to the menace of hospital superbugs which claim up to 5,000 lives a year, lead to serious illness and amputations in tens of thousands more and cost the NHS £1bn a year?

A treatment used routinely in east European countries like Georgia and Poland appears to have achieved extraordinary results. It has been known about for nearly a century and is called phage therapy. Put simply, it employs one bug to kill another. Phages are viruses which infect and kill only bacteria and which, like plant viruses, are harmless to humans. Humans are host to millions of them and they exist wherever microbes do.

Phages were first used to treat bacterial infections in humans 85 years ago, but post-Alexander Fleming, penicillin and antibiotics, phages were largely forgotten in the west. However, research, development and clinical use continued in eastern Europe.

Research from Poland published four years ago suggested that of 1,307 patients with "suppurative bacterial infections caused by multidrug-resistant bacteria of different species", a staggering 85 percent made a full recovery when treated with phages. In 134 cases some improvement was reported and in only 50 cases was the treatment unsuccessful. In particular it is said to have proved extremely successful treating deep bone and wound infection, diabetic ulcers, as well as lung and gut infections. The study isolated five antibiotic-resistant bacteria, including the staphylococcus aureus, the superbug of most concern in British hospitals.

So if phage therapy is so promising, why isn't Britain using it — or at least researching and testing phages? According to microbiologist Nicholas Mann, who at the University of Warwick is trying to incorporate anti-MRSA phages into wound dressings and nasal sprays, the answer is "money and regulation". He has tried and failed to get drug companies to fund his research and was met by a complete lack of interest from the NHS.

No one, it seems, wants to invest money in an idea that can't be exploited through intellectual property rights – phage therapy has simply been around too long. Yet the claimed advantage of phages, as those in specialist centres like the Eliava Institute in Tbilisi, Georgia, and in Poland have found, is that unlike antibiotics which have a machine gun effect on all bacteria, these are bacteria specific: target weapons that can also penetrate bones and ulcers, for example, where antibiotics cannot reach. They are also fairly easy to cultivate from the bacteria themselves.

Colin Walkin, a biochemist, drew the Polish study to the attention of Britain's health chiefs but was told it was "useful but disappointing" because it was not conducted as a controlled trial. Nevertheless he was assured there were two phage studies being undertaken in the UK, one partly government funded into lung infection in cystic fibrosis sufferers and another into, er, poultry.

One UK company, Phico Therapeutics Ltd, has managed to secure investment for a variation of phage therapy: it is using specific proteins that bind to bacterial DNA in order to kill the superbugs, but introducing them into the bacteria using the bacterial viruses. The attraction for investors is that the protein can be patented (whereas phages themselves cannot) and Phico's Dr Heather Fairhead says the use of the protein should minimise the risk of bacterial resistance.

But it is the NHS which has most to gain from finding an effective weapon against MRSA – especially as a few million spent now from the Medical Research Council's £170m annual research budget has the potential to save hundreds of lives and billions of pounds in the future.

Now that Poland is an EU member, licensing and regulation could be speeded up. Other countries, like the US which has an even bigger MRSA problem, is further down the road of phage therapy but still lagging behind eastern Europe. Israel, India and Germany are also seriously looking at the therapy.

In the meantime, as word spreads and the superbug problem deepens, more and more westerners are taking health breaks in Georgia to save their limbs and cure themselves of infection. People like Alfred Gertler, a musician from Canada, who had been told he faced amputation after an ankle injury became infected after surgery; and American Fred Bledsoe who risked losing his foot from drug-resistant infection after stepping on a nail. Both were cured after treatment at Tbilisi. "This is certainly the route that I would currently recommend if I had a friend or family who was diagnosed with a serious infection that couldn't be treated with conventional antibiotics," said Dr Fairhead.

Alfred Gertler

ASBESTOS

Compensation vulture

ASBESTOS victims in the UK are being warned against a settlement plan being drawn up by Federal Mogul, the US car-part giant which has been trying to manoeuvre its way out of paying proper compensation.

Federal Mogul swallowed up the asbestos-ridden Turner & Newall (which was due to pay millions in compensation to hundreds of UK workers with deadly asbestos-related illnesses) but promptly declared part of itself bankrupt. Victims' payments stopped immediately; one man's cheque for several thousand pounds bounced; and all court actions were halted pending the bankruptcy proceedings.

Unlike the UK, Chapter XI bankruptcy proceedings in the US allow a company to declare part of its business insolvent while the rest continues to trade. Thus Federal Mogul was able to ditch its asbestos responsibilities.

Last month it also emerged that many past and present UK employees, including 20,000 pensioners, face the prospect of their pensions being halved or frozen thanks to a £875m hole in the company pension scheme which Federal Mogul is refusing to top up.

The *Eye* has already reported how the legal and administrative costs of winding up Federal Mogul's asbestos concerns in Britain – around US$75m a year – were likely to exceed the compensation British victims could expect. Now Federal Mogul has paid for newspaper adverts and is writing to each victim to get support for its plan, drawn up at US headquarters, to set up a trust to compensate asbestos victims worldwide. The scheme, however, will be based in the US; and under US law American asbestos victims will take precedence over those here. In other words, there will be little or nothing left for British victims.

John Battle, the Leeds MP who has campaigned on behalf of UK victims, is urging them not to sign up. He said: "Even the administrators, Kroll Buchler Phillips, have expressed surprise at this direct appeal that bypasses them and their attempts to salvage compensation for the British victims."

CONTAMINATED BLOOD

Compassion fatigue

THE VAST majority of Britain's 5,000 haemophiliacs who contracted deadly diseases after being given contaminated blood products have still not received the "compassion" money promised them a year ago by health secretary John Reid.

Those with hepatitis C were offered a derisory £20,000, with an extra £25,000 for those who could show their disease had become "serious" – a tenth of what is being offered in Ireland and Canada. Though payment was promised in April, so far only a fraction have received an initial £20,000. They are HIV/Aids sufferers who were fast-tracked because they had already received similar "compassion" money for suffering HIV/Aids and were already on the payment database.

Those "fortunate" enough to suffer only hepatitis C (though the long-term effects can be just as devastating) have received nothing so far. Even worse, it now emerges that the Skipton Trust which is administering the fund hasn't yet drawn up the application form needed to apply for the enhanced payment for those with serious illness, including liver disease. Some, it is feared, will therefore die before payment is made.

Some hepatitis sufferers are waiting for their payment so they can contribute to a joint fighting fund to mount a legal challenge to the government's refusal to hold a public inquiry into this major health scandal. Contaminated blood and clotting factors, much of it from known high-risk paid donors in the US, were given to thousands of people up until 1985 when heat treatment introduced to combat HIV also by chance eradicated hepatitis C. About 5,000 haemophiliacs and many more patients who were given blood transfusions following accidents or surgery were infected. About 1,200 also contracted HIV, most of whom have since died.

Yet it is clear that since the early 1970s health service officials and doctors had been aware of the risks of what was then identified as "non A, non B hepatitis" in "suspect" American batches and brands of blood clotting agents.

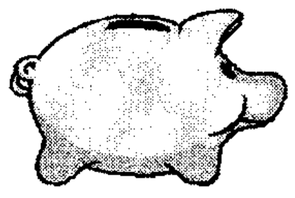
As long ago as 1978 a UK haemophilia expert advised that it would be safer to give patients a synthetic clotting agent, or find a way to de-activate the hepatitis virus. But even today some haemophiliac sufferers are still being denied safe, synthetic products because of their cost.

Peter Longstaff, whose haemophiliac brother died of Aids in 1986, has now been exposed to vCJD on top of his advanced stage liver disease and HIV. He recently failed in the high court to force his Newcastle hospital to give him synthetic blood-clotting agent. Although sympathetic, the judge said it was up to Mr Longstaff's health trust to decide its spending priorities.

Had Mr Longstaff been given the synthetic recombinant treatment when he first asked for it in 1995, he would not have been given CJD-infected blood. Mr Longstaff, now 44, is seriously ill and receiving palliative care. Though as an HIV sufferer he should have been fast-tracked for payment, he hasn't received a "compassionate" penny either.

LOOT! by 'Bruin'

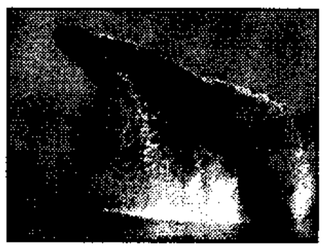
at **BP**



£1,160,000
What the company paid into CEO Lord Browne's pension fund last year

£37,100
What it paid in wages to the average employee

WHALE MEAT AGAIN...



ONCE again the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), held this summer in the lovely Italian resort of Sorrento, was dominated by a row about "vote-buying". However, the wrath of the commission was directed not at the vote-buyers but at those who had the temerity to expose the scandal.

For several years Japan has been offering lavish financial inducements to small, developing countries in the hope that they will repay the favour by joining the IWC and voting to overturn the moratorium on commercial whaling which was imposed in 1986. As we reported in *Eye* 1069, the bribes generally take the form of "fisheries development aid": thanks to Japanese largesse, Antigua has two new $15m fishing complexes, Grenada has an $11m fish market and dock, and Dominica an $18m port and fish market. Other beneficiaries include St Lucia ($24m) and St Vincent ($6m).

Rolland Schmitten

Minoru Morimoto

This year, conscious that Japan was on the verge of buying a majority, a coalition of non-governmental organisations – including Greenpeace, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) – drew attention to the scandal in a widely reported press conference on the first day. IFAW also issued a press release denouncing Japan for "taking advantage of the poverty and need of the smallest countries in the international community to get, with money, what it cannot obtain with the force of sound legal arguments and with the support of the best available scientific data and evidence". This duly infuriated the Japanese and their groupies, who at a secret commissioners' meeting demanded that IFAW should have its observer status rescinded.

Although NGOs are restricted in what they can do within IWC meetings, there are no rules about what they can say to the press outside. But this didn't stop IWC's acting chairman Rolland Schmitten and vice-chairman Minoru Morimoto (himself implicated in the vote-buying scandal) from summoning the IFAW team and demanding a grovelling apology for their "offensive" allegation, which was wholly "without substantiation". IFAW replied by asking what rule it had broken, and what process would be used to determine its guilt or innocence.

Uncomfortable with any kind of public scrutiny, the commissioners held another secret meeting – delaying the IWC's main business by several hours – which turned into a kangaroo court "trying" IFAW. The charges were never made clear, no opportunity was given for the defendant to provide evidence, the trial was held in camera and the defendant was not told the verdict. But the main outcome is that the IWC will placate the pro-whalers by introducing new "rules of conduct" for NGOs at next year's meeting, which will allow for the expulsion of anyone who embarrasses the Japanese.

Meanwhile, the phrase "vote-buying" was never once uttered of the floor of the IWC meeting itself, and we have it on the authority of Messrs Schmitten and Morimoto that the problem doesn't exist. The fact that, say, St Kitts and Nevis, a country with no interest in whaling, has nevertheless joined the IWC and voted with the Japanese on 71 of a possible 72 occasions over the past five years – during which time Japan has given St Kitts a $10m fisheries complex – is clearly no more than a happy coincidence.

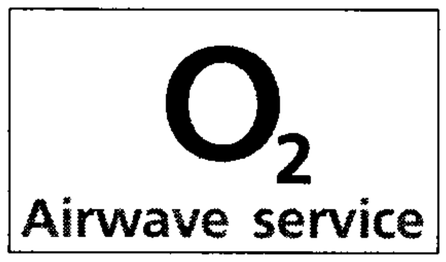
Police mast debate

WHAT is the point of the planning appeals process when telecom giant Airwave O2 can blatantly ignore the decision of a government inspector and continue operating a tetra radio mast near Birmingham?

Campaigners are baffled as to why, after victory in their year-long battle, the 15-metre high mast is still operating near Dorrington Primary School in Great Barr. Birmingham council has bowed to the company, saying it is willing to consider a new planning application before it insists the mast be torn down.

Airwave O2, which operates the terrestrial trucked radio (Tetra) system for police radios, says that health fears relating to the technology are unfounded. But anti-mast campaigners point to symptoms reported by those living near the new masts as well as to the recommendations of the Stewart Report on mobile phones that the "beam of greatest intensity" from mobile masts should not fall on schools or school grounds. Tetra operates on a different frequency to mobile phones, which many believe is potentially more harmful.

Whatever the truth of the health issues (respected scientists are ranged on both sides of the argument) it is clear that Airwave O2 has no respect for the law or democratic process. Around the country planning authorities have had to threaten the company with court injunctions to stop it throwing up immense masts with no planning permission. Masts have now been dismantled in Sussex, but others which have been refused retrospective permission are still operating.



ASYLUM AND CITIZENSHIP

Stone me!

AN IRANIAN asylum-seeker who was so desperate to stay in Britain he sewed up his eyelids and mouth is being sent back to Iran with the advice that, if he really does face death by stoning there, he can always try to "bribe his way out of trouble".

Shahin Portofeh, 24, has failed to obtain refuge in Britain because the independent adjudicator here does not believe that he faces lapidation in Iran for pursuing a homosexual affair.

What makes this incredible finding even worse is that in the deportation letter to Portofeh's lawyers, the bribery claim was cited without question by a home office border control and enforcement officer "acting on behalf of the secretary of state".

Portofeh's case failed partly because the adjudicator did not believe Portofeh was homosexual. Portofeh therefore submitted a doctor's expert report to the home office confirming that he was indeed gay, but the enforcement officer rejected it on the grounds that it stood in contrast to the adjudicator's findings. The officer then added that in any event if Mr Portofeh and the doctor were correct, the adjudicator had already found that "he would still not be liable to persecution upon return. He could relocate and he could in fact bribe his way out of trouble."

Originally Portofeh, who fled to the UK in 2002 and has been living in Coventry, was unable to provide proof of the death sentence passed on him. He explained to the adjudicator that it was difficult for his family to send documents out of Iran because they were under scrutiny and their post was searched. When his sister did later manage to smuggle out a copy of the court order, it was rejected by the home office on the grounds that "it was unlikely that two weeks after his appeal hearing this situation would have changed allowing his sister to post it".

The home office was anxious to distance itself from being seen to "condone or support the bribery of any official", saying it used the full quotes of the adjudicator to "fully highlight" his position and that the adjudicator was in any event the responsibility of the department for constitutional affairs. There is no suggestion it will look at the case again in the light of such a bizarre finding.

Portofeh's supporters, who include several MPs and trade unions as well as his local community, are now appealing directly to home secretary David Blunkett.

Iran is condemned by international human rights monitors for its unfair trails, detention of political prisoners, its floggings and deaths by stoning and is, of course, now part of the "axis of evil". But the home office is still apparently happy to return Portofeh there.

Talking nonsense

HOME secretary David Blunkett's plans for those seeking British citizenship have already come unstuck thanks to the bungling incompetence of the immigration and nationality department.

At the end of last month, anyone applying to become a British national had to prove that they could speak English to the standard of something called an "ESOL level 3 certificate". The change in rules was not published on the home office website until that day of implementation and even expert immigration lawyers were unaware of the rule change.

One lawyer representing "Muyunda", a 31-year-old mother who has been resident in the UK with her family for more than 13 years, asked the home office's "Managed Migration Unit" how his client should go about meeting the requirement of that rule, only to be told that as the unit itself had only just learnt of the change, it did not know.

ESOL stands for "English for Speakers of Other Languages" and Muyunda originally comes from Uganda, where the official language is, er, English. The new rule is being applied to Muyunda just as it is across the board to white Canadians and Australians too.

No doubt realising after the event that it is ludicrous to ask English speakers like Muyunda to take an ESOL exam, the home office has now said she can go to a "designated person" who can quickly verify that she has "sufficient knowledge of English". A shame, then, the home office has not yet appointed any "designated persons".

Muyunda was told: "Details of this are being finalised, and further information about designated persons will be issued as soon as possible." Unfortunately no one in the home office knows exactly who or how many colleges, state or private, provide ESOL courses and the education department is not expected to provide any answers until next month either.

Thus Muyunda and many other would-be nationals are currently being penalised for failing to obey a rule the home office itself openly admits is impossible to comply with. But by returning all those new applications citing "non-compliance" while it appoints designated people and finds colleges where people can get an ESOL 3, it ensures they won't be an embarrassing backlog statistic. And that will buy the UnManaged Migration Unit time to deal with the 40,000 backlog that has built up since introduction of Blunkett's citizenship ceremonies.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE Merseyside mystery over whether or not the Russians are coming to rescue premiership under-achievers Everton with a boundless cheque book has thrust back into the spotlight one of the pioneers in piloting Russian offshore money.

Trust manager and investment adviser Christopher Samuelson – a one-time business partner of the world's richest prisoner, Mikhail Khodorkovsky of Yukos, and last heard of five years ago amid the Bank of New York hot money scandal – quickly emerged as the spokesman for the suggested takeover of Everton by a Brunei-based sports fund backed by the Zingarevich family whose estimated £400m fortune has been made out of timber products.

Twentysomething Anton Zingarevich has made all the running over Everton. He was said to have formed with the Geneva-based Samuelson and others the Fortress Sports Fund that is supposedly set to inject £20m into the club in return for a controlling stake. But the real money and power resides in Moscow with his father Boris, best known for an ongoing battle for control of core paper mill assets in the Ilim pulp empire with the aluminium boss Oleg Deripaska of Rusal. A battle which has extended from the courtroom to armed confrontations between rival goon squads. Just the kind of people to own a soccer club.

Three years ago a disputed legal judgment resulted in three Ilim pulp and paper mills, among the largest in Russia, being seized by the state and sold to Deripaska and his associates. Ilim contested the sale and refused to hand over the mills. At one mill two busloads of private security men retreated when outnumbered by Ilim heavies. Since then the two sides have been alternatively negotiating or litigating. That's business, Russian style.

Samuelson appeared to be singing from a different songbook when confidently telling Everton fans the £20m was a done deal. The next word coming out of Moscow was that Boris and his twin brother Mikhail had no interest in Everton. "If we do that we have to leave the country forever," declared an Ilim spokesman.

No doubt the Zingarevich brothers have in mind the example of Roman Abramovich (Deripaska's partner in Rusal, but not part of the battle over Ilim). After buying premiership rivals Chelsea, Abromovich's high profile in Russia has hurt him and helped make him such a political target he rarely if ever now goes there.

However, Moscow sources suggest that because in Russian business all is not often what it seems, there may yet be some more discreet deal done involving Zigarevich interests and Everton. If so, the world will be hearing a lot more from Christopher Samuelson who now runs Mutual Trust Management, much better known under its previous incarnation as the Valmet group.

Valmet operated mainly from Geneva, Gibraltar and the Isle of Man. For five years from 1989 Valmet was 51 percent-controlled by the Washington-based Riggs Bank which, it has since emerged, was the bank of choice for foreign dictators looking to hide their illegal loot. The bank was fined $25m in May for failing to prevent suspect transactions. Riggs remained a 5 percent Valmet shareholder until 1998.

In 1994 Riggs sold most of its shares back to Samuelson and his partners Christian Michel and Peter Bond. Michel ran Geneva while Bond ran the Isle of Man. Samuelson ran Gibraltar. By now Russian money was a big Valmet earner. The company had already attracted the attention of Khodorkovsky, then running Bank Menatep and the industrial group Rosprom while planning to grab the state-owned Yukos oil group through the loans-for-shares scam. Another Valmet client was Roman Abramovich who would soon acquire Sibneft by similar means.

Valmet ran offshore companies, trusts and bank accounts for the new owners of Yukos and Sibneft. These arrangements were often used to channel funds out of Russia. Valmet said these were legitimate, commercial deals. Critics, such as minority shareholders in Russian companies controlled by Menatep, disagreed. They said the offshore companies were used to short-change investors. Disputes involving Yukos and Menatep-controlled titanium producer Avisma ended in court.

Peter Bond was a key player in many of these deals. So too was London lawyer Stephen Curtis whose helicopter fell out of the sky last March not long after he had offered to share his Yukos secrets with the British authorities. Bond and Curtis's sensitive role in creating the offshore ownership structure behind Yukos was set out in *Eye* 1102.

So close did Samuelson and Bond get to Khodorkovsky that Bank Menatep in 1994, post-Riggs, became a 20 percent shareholder in Valmet's Bermuda-registered parent; but unlike Riggs it had no boardroom presence. When Bank Menatep imploded in 1998 in the rouble crisis, Samuelson and friends moved to buy back the stake.

It was eventually acquired after the Bank of New York scandal broke in 1999 when it emerged that $7bn had flowed out of Russia through BNY accounts resulting in a US investigation into allegations of money-laundering for the Russian mafia. While certainly some of the BNY funds were mob linked, mainly to the crime group headed by Semion Mogilevich, most was flight capital or tax evasion.

Investigators soon focused on the role of Bank Menatep and its associate Valmet which had made several transfers to a London company called Benex which was central to the laundering investigation. The wife of Menatep director Konstantin Kagalovsky ran BNY's Moscow operations. Kagolovsky recently surfaced with a plan to buy out the Khodorkovsky stake in Yukos, largely held through the Gibraltar company Group Menatep, in a bid to save the company from possible bankruptcy and provide a get out of jail card for his former partner.

No action was taken against the Kagalovskys or Valmet as a result of the BNY investigation; but when the smoke cleared Menatep ceased to be a Valmet shareholder and Valmet became Mutual Trust Management owned by Samuelson and his associates.

Soon Peter Bond too was no longer part of the Valmet picture. Bond left in 2001 after he gave evidence about his involvement in the affairs of American penny stock promoter Robert Brennan. Bond testified under an immunity deal that while at Valmet he had helped hide money for Brennan who was jailed for nine years. Neither Bond nor Valmet was accused of any wrongdoing. Valmet has always insisted that its offshore activities are entirely legal.

Should the Everton deal go ahead, no doubt fans on Merseyside will be happy to know they have such a well connected and financially astute benefactor as Samuelson and his colourful clients.

SCOTLAND Yard is expected to expand the investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Abbey National business analyst Richard Chang who fell to his death from the fifth floor of the atrium at the bank's headquarters in July. This follows pressure from Chang's family. The wider investigation could now examine allegations of sweetheart deals and possible corruption contained in an anonymous letter sent to Abbey directors. The letter is said to have named senior executives at the bank and questioned their closeness to consultants awarded IT contracts by Abbey.

Some of the allegations are believed to relate to the introduction of the expensive "Wall Street Systems" computer programme. The project has been dogged with staff and performance problems. One of those executives involved in awarding the contract had a long association with one of the consultants. He has since left Abbey National.

The allegations were dismissed as unfounded and malicious by Abbey after an internal inquiry. But Abbey insiders and expert observers query why the allegations were not also investigated by corporate investigators Kroll Associates who instead were merely hired by the bank to discover the letter's author.

Less than an hour after requesting a break during an interview by two Kroll operatives about the letter – during which he had denied their suggestions that he was the author – Chang fell to

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

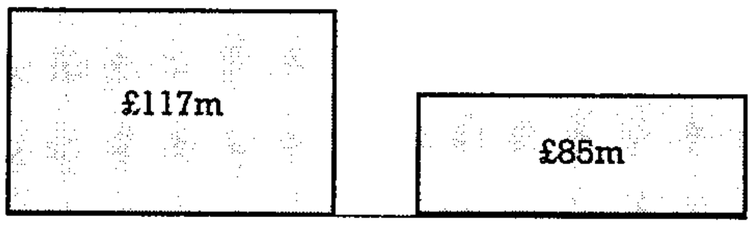
WE ARE MAKING THESE DISPOSALS AT THE TOP OF THE BUSINESS CYCLE TO RETURN MAXIMUM VALUE TO SHAREHOLDERS ...
I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE TIMING HERE ...
I CAN REASSURE YOU ON THAT, TOM ...
OUR CHEQUES ARE ALREADY IN THE POST!

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Bugger-Me

Value of shares in booth operator Photo-Me...



his death in an apparent suicide. Although a note was found indicating his involvement, Chang's family do not accept that it was suicide (he was due to start a new job at Royal Bank of Scotland) and want a full police investigation rather than the narrow investigation of the coroner.

Chang's colleagues have questioned why they were discouraged by the Abbey management from talking to his family about the events leading up to his death. One reason could be the fear of legal liability faced by Abbey and Kroll. The Chang interview was taped without his knowledge.

Friends have also queried how he could alone have known all the detailed information contained in the letter which ran to several pages. Kroll had a short list of eight Abbey employees to interview. One remains under suspension. Abbey warned staff that anyone found to be involved in the letter faced possible prosecution.

An expanded police investigation could delay the inquest for months rather than weeks. Meanwhile the circumstances surrounding Richard Chang's death are likely to interest Abbey's would-be suitors Banco Santander and possible UK rivals such as HBOS, as well as the financial services authority.

THE SFO's only major scalp this year is Carl Cushnie for the Versailles trade finance fraud. Many legal eyebrows were raised during that trial when his brief, Alun Jones QC, one of the leading fraud defence experts (Kevin Maxwell/Wickes/T.C. Coombs), walked out because Cushnie switched to legal aid thereby slashing his fees to a mere £600 a day.

Jones and Cushnie's lawyers Peters & Peters seemingly had agreed that Cushnie would personally pay a much higher fee that would have totalled well into six figures. When Cushnie said he could no longer pay, Jones was entitled to leave although whether that was the right thing to do is another matter. And whether that cost Cushnie his six-year sentence – Jones is a renowned performer with juries – can never be certain.

It is surely wholly unconnected that in early February, just days before Cushnie pleaded poverty and Jones made his excuses and left, it had emerged during a high court hearing, involving a claim brought by one of the Versailles investors, that Cushnie owned a property, L'Ecossaise, near St Tropez on the Cote d'Azure worth around £10m. Cushnie had already put up the house as security for a £5m loan. But that still left a healthy margin. Cushnie had transferred control of the property to his sister on behalf of a trust a month before he was charged in 2001.

Mr Justice Mann found Cushnie's tax explanation for the transfer "highly unconvincing". He also did not accept claims by Cushnie's lawyers that he had no substantial free assets. The judge pointed out there was the not so little matter of the £29m Cushnie realised from selling Versailles shares weeks before the group collapsed in 1999.

Ironically, while acquitted of orchestrating the main Versailles fraud, Cushnie was convicted of defrauding the offshore investors such as those in the high court case. The SFO is due to start confiscation proceedings against him in October.

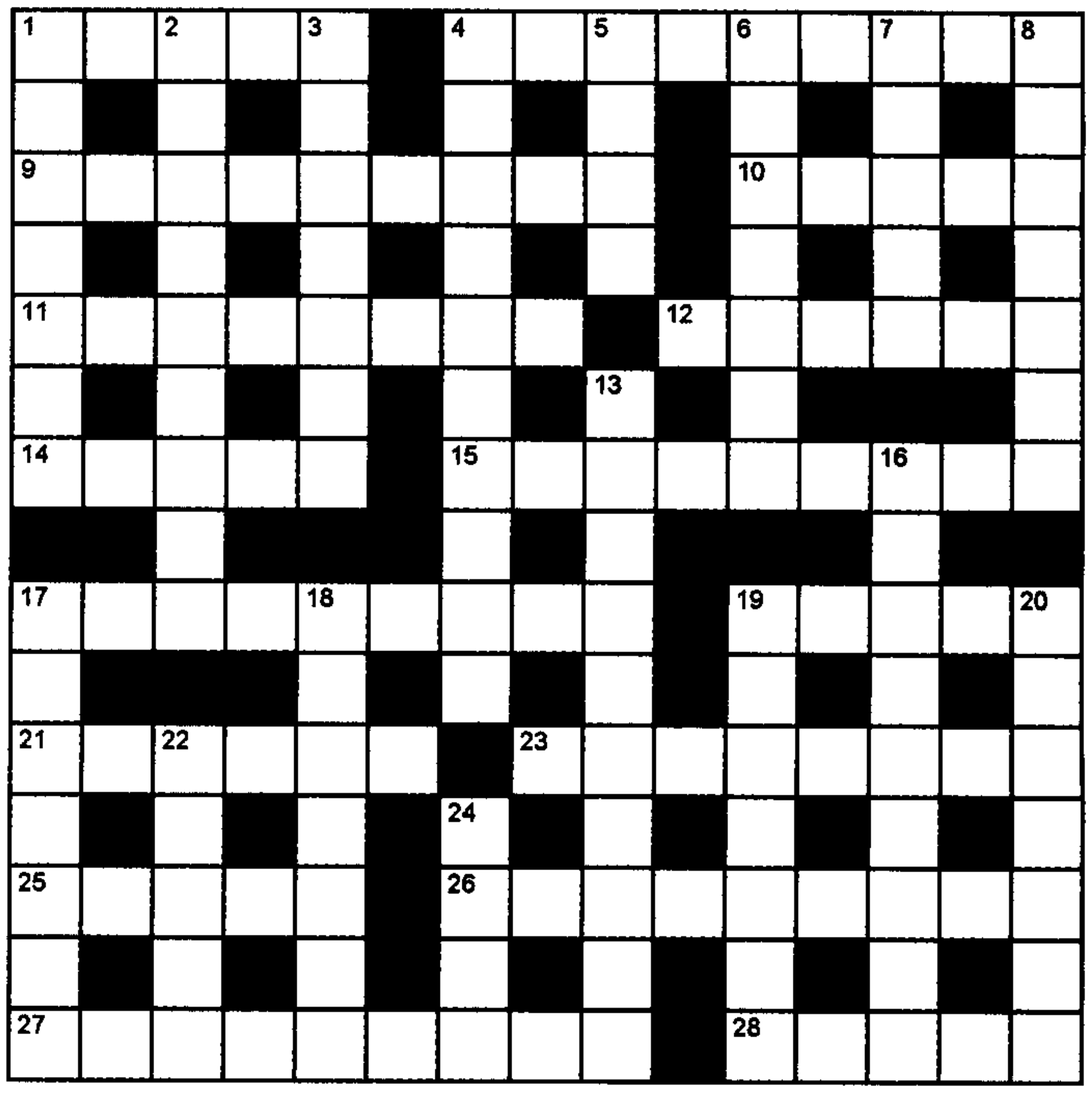
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 269

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 10 September 2004.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1/4dn. Getting to look like Conference is developing into a shambles (5,4-6)
4 With which to run through a group of employees prick first (9)
9 Here's one \ to support when on piss (9)
10 The old leader's pecker has turned game (5)
11 "Hump"? I use "given a seeing-to", a rather high-flown expression (8)
12 N. African port: half of Tony Blair's emptied on this country (6)
14 Second bare bust held by cavalryman? (5)
15 Nameless state of Tony in May's fiasco (9)
17 Bush pawn: what Blair is as far as 10 Downing Street's concerned (9)
19 A bit of a fairy, Frank's first into line dancing (5)
21 Leaderless political party hosts good binges (6)
23 Intellectual pissed, born to argue (8)
25 Up before court (5)
26 Inscrutable feature of right mug after shag (5,4)
27 Newly wed, "Mr Bear", "Pan between the sheets" (9)
28 It's said you might get your leg over this with a certain elegance (5)

DOWN

1 Big erection hindrances, bowels (7)
2 Pissed sailor hugged by pissed pelican (9)
3 Gets off with Midge as a token act? (7)
4 See 1 Across
5 Old leader delivers punch to hard left (4)
6 Feeling rampant, senors, yes? (7)
7 Hate Arab horse dumping behind (5)
8 Brenda's kind of man, slipping length in frolic opener (7)
13 Perhaps Blair to Bush: "Kick ass, Thrasher" (10)
16 Place for the sick popular with evergreen Archer, perhaps (9)
17 Publicity finished, Blair's no. 1 saw (7)
18 Ain't I stupid accepting Brenda's doing sod all? (7)
19 Urges Thor to be operated on in sex change (7)
20 At present, William Hague's tops – before being right out of the running (7)
22 Vice that gives a good 'rush' (5)
24 Member gets erection – packed with top grade meat (4)

Crossword 268 winner: M. WILCOCK

ACROSS: 1 Boom-bust 5 Bedaub 9 Until 10 Retardant 12 Flagstaff 13 Tamil 14/20 Pseuds Corner 15 Top heavy 18 Unzipped 22 Pimps 24 Sicknurse 27 Nailbiter 28 Semen 29 Dosser 30 Bird shit.

DOWN: 1 Bluff 2 Out-take 3 Ballsed up 4 Syria 6 Egret 7 Anaemia 8 Bit player 11 Teflon 14 Plumpened 16 Hook-nosed 17 Jetset 19 Zombies 21 Nkrumah 23 Sable 25 Corgi 26 Ernst.

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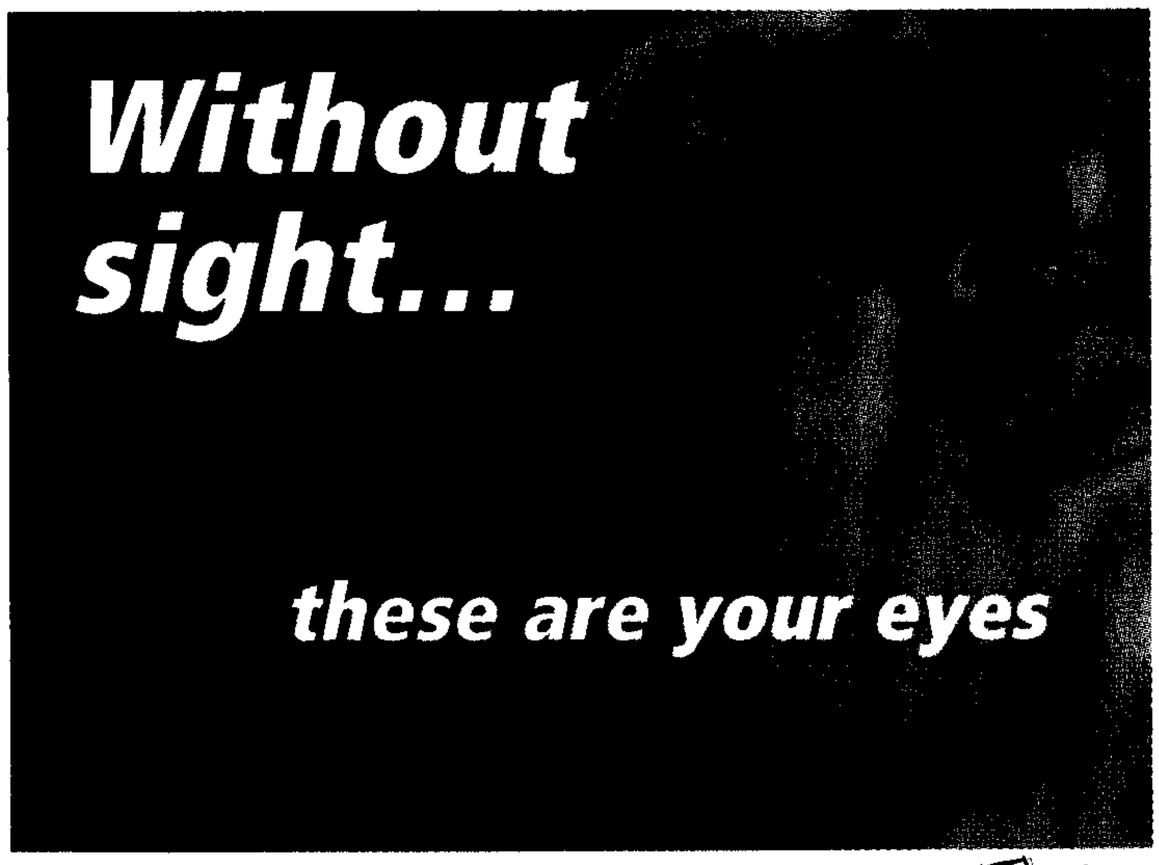

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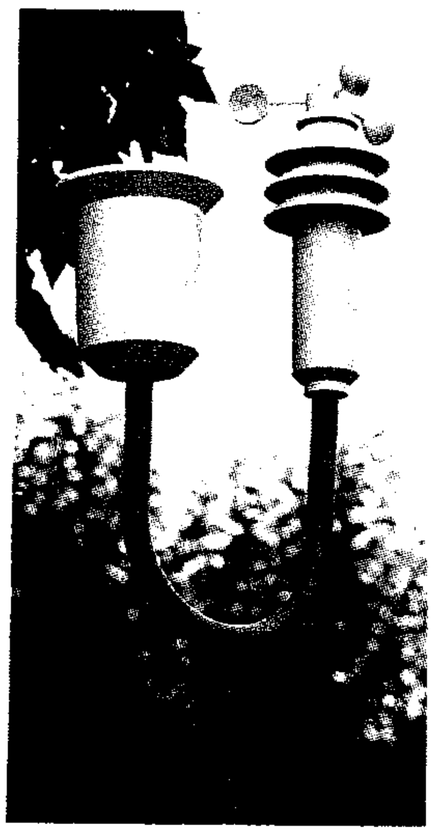

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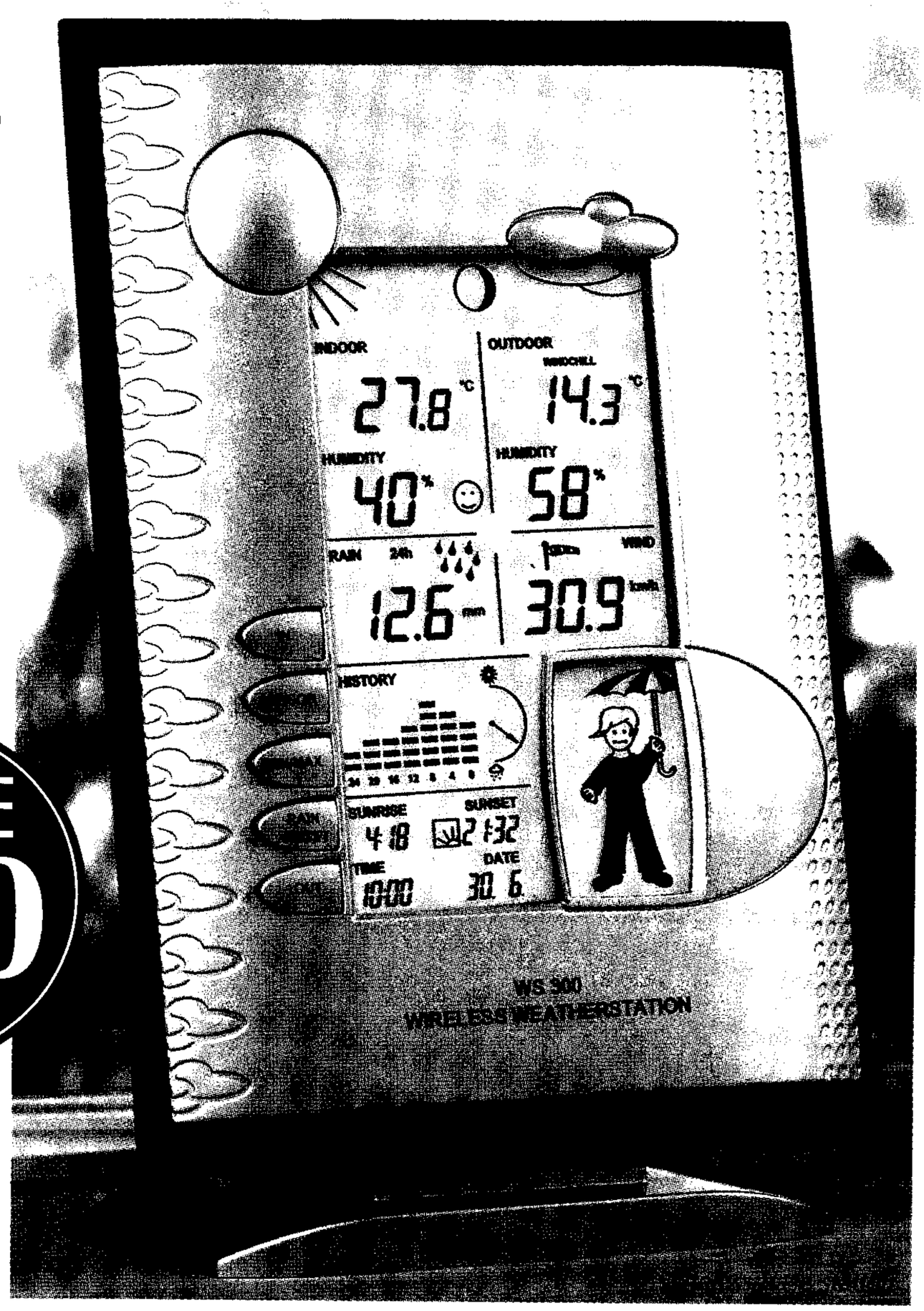

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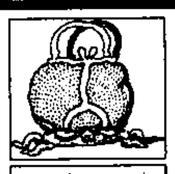
Cartoon Gallery



A selection of cartoons, illustrations and animated cels can be found on the **Cartoon Gallery Website**, from **Chris Riddell** to **Steve Bell, Alex** to **Appleby, Honeysett** to **Husband** and **McLachlan** to **Matt.**

The site also has extensive biographies, including **Ronald Searle** and **Kipper Williams** and the **Search by Subject** pages contain **12** categories from **Art** to **Therapy,** showing over **120** original cartoons.

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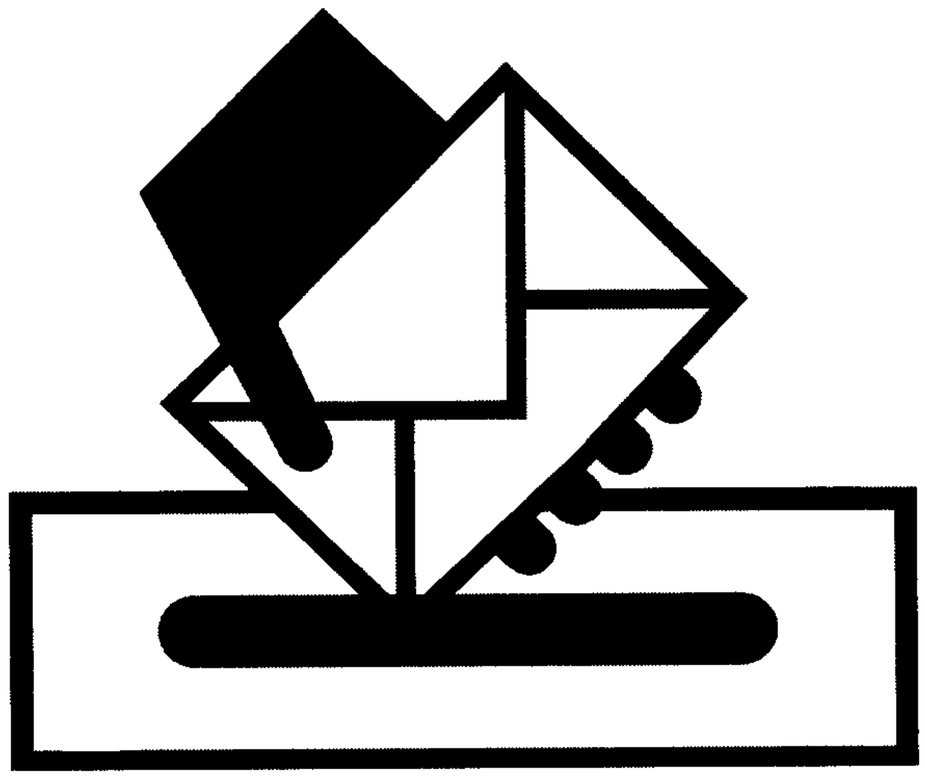

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The competition will be judged by Steve Bell, Martin Rowson (Chairman, British Cartoonists' Association), Dr Tim Benson (Chair, The Political Cartoon Society) and Anita O'Brien (The Cartoon Art Trust Museum). Applicants need to be aged 18 or over and British or resident in Britain.

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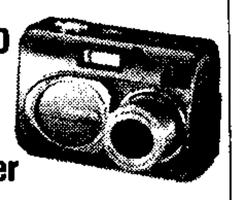

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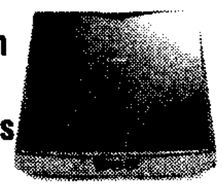

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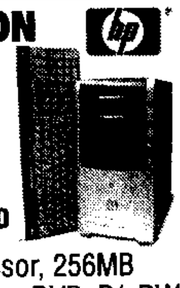

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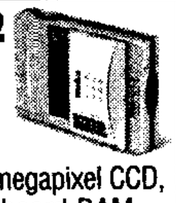

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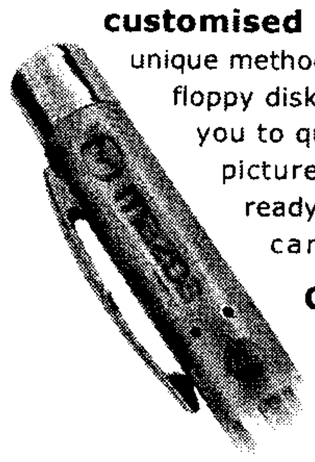

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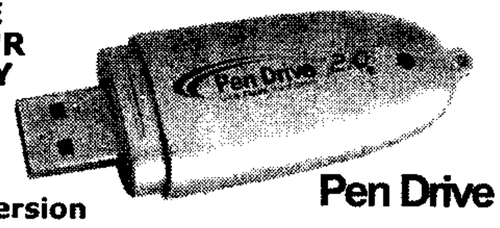

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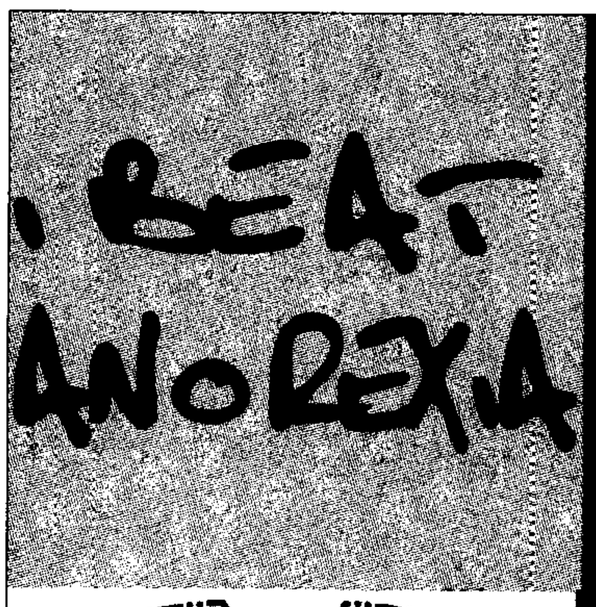

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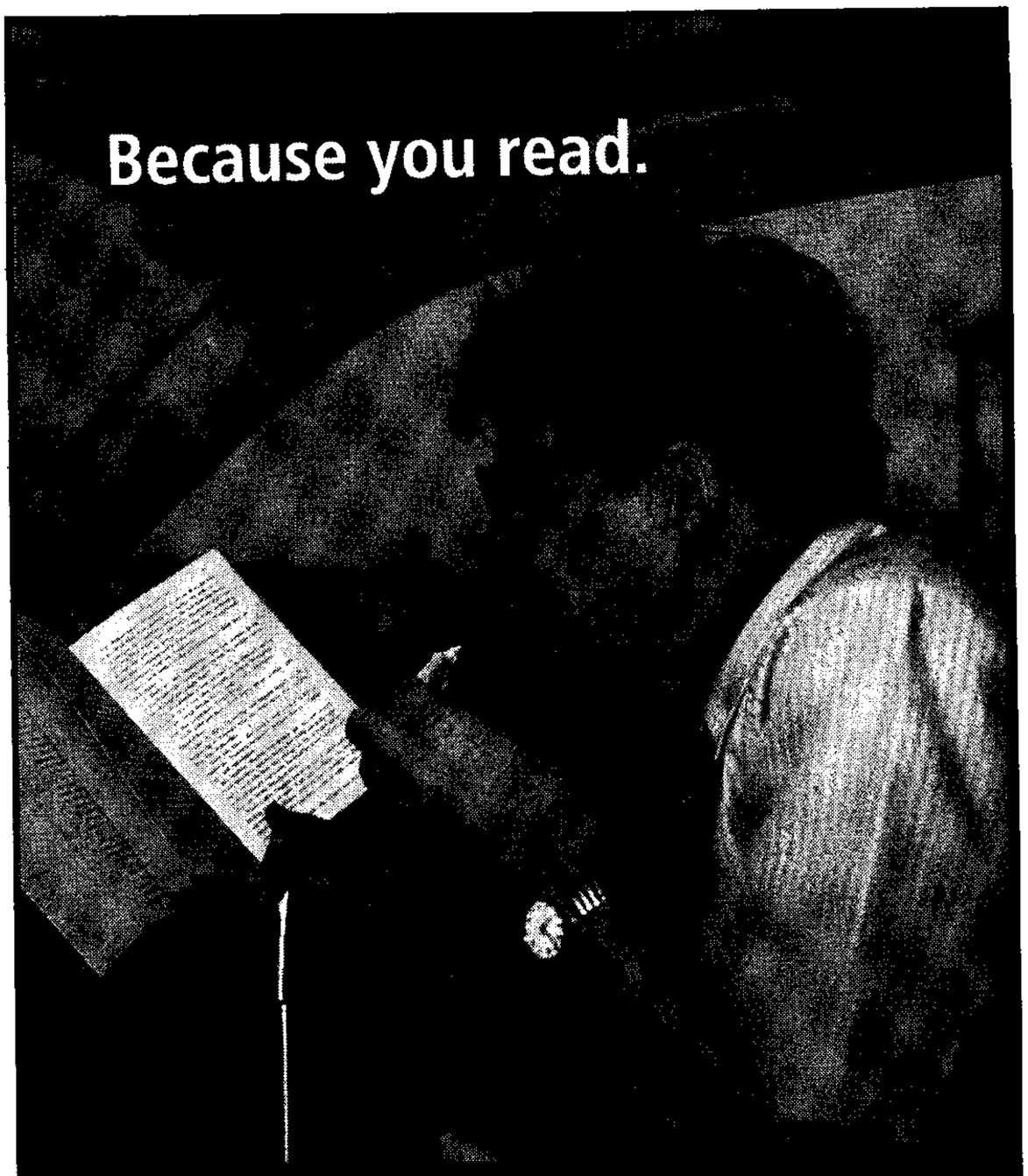

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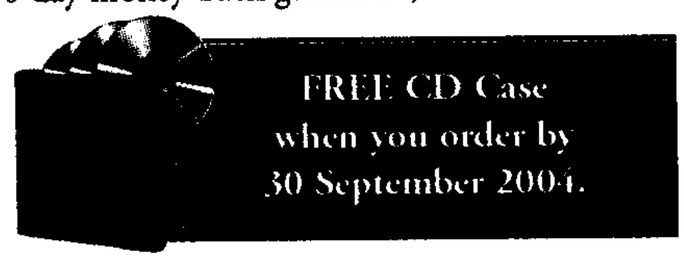

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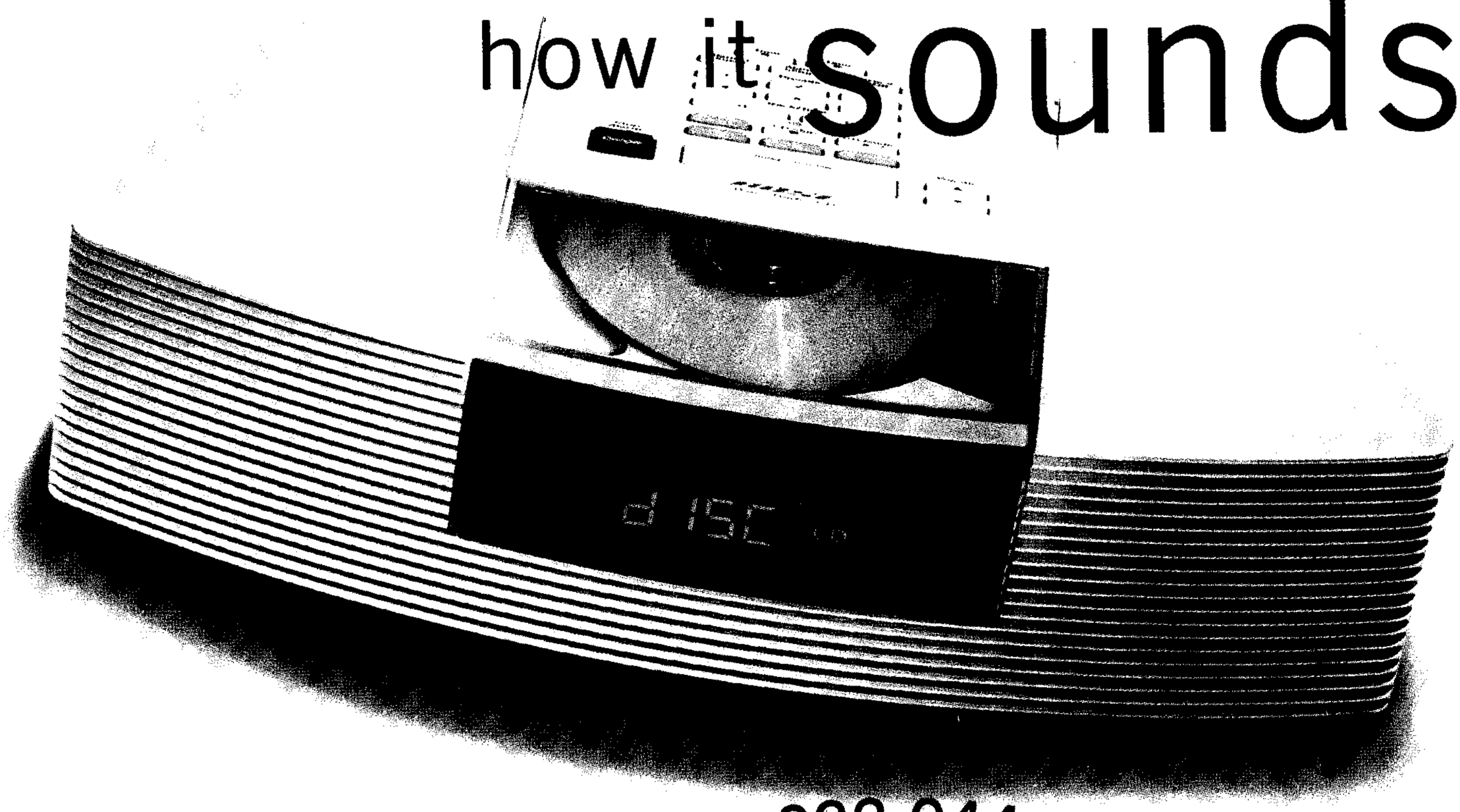

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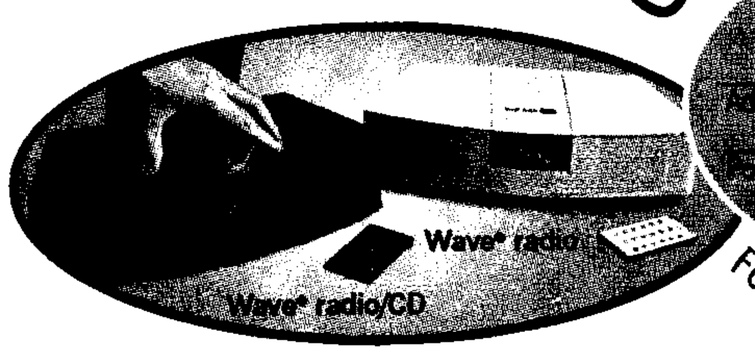

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